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A 713,157

D

79L

7

14

4

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H II
153
C 64

*EXTRACTS FROM NOTICES OF THESE PAPERS
AS THEY APPEARED IN 'THE TIMES'*

"'The Times' Special Reporter has done good service by setting before the public the unvarnished and unblackened picture of the Agricultural Labourer and his surroundings."
—*Quarterly Review*.

"We are indebted for the facts of this case chiefly to 'The Times' Correspondent, whose letters are on all hands admitted to contain accurate statements, and whose tone is one of great fairness to all concerned. It is, in our judgment, impossible to speak too highly of the manner in which the writer has discharged a difficult duty."—*Blackwood's Magazine*.

"Your Correspondent in the Eastern Counties has given a most impartial and just account of the many advantages and disadvantages that are shared in alike by the employer and the employed in every phase of their different circumstances. No description so elaborate and so true has ever before been given to the world, reflecting, as the letters of your Correspondent have done, a very mirror of rural life."—*A South Wilts Farmer* in 'The Times.'



THE AGRICULTURAL LOCK-OUT
OF 1874

REPRINTED, BY PERMISSION, FROM 'THE TIMES'

21689

THE
AGRICULTURAL LOCK-OUT
OF 1874

WITH NOTES UPON
FARMING AND FARM-LABOUR IN THE
EASTERN COUNTIES

BY
FREDERICK CLIFFORD
OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE, BARRISTER-AT-LAW

"Nec semper feriet quodcunque minabitur Arcus."—HOR.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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P R E F A C E.

THE Letters which have here been woven into a narrative were published in 'The Times' during the year 1874. They describe the first great struggle between the farmers and the agricultural labourers of England—or, as the farmers prefer to say, between themselves and the Trade-Union leaders—and the first important symptoms in rural society of an antagonism between capital and labour, with which Artisan Trade-Unions have made us familiar in the towns. A struggle so prolonged, and so novel in many of its conditions, will always be remarkable in our industrial history, and has been thought worthy of some permanent record.

The story of the Strikes and Lock-out would be incomplete without a description of the peasantry in East Anglia, their wages, their homes, and their relations with employers at the time of this unhappy estrangement. In the Letters here collected such a

description has been attempted. It does not profess to be exhaustive ; but, as far as it goes, the aim has been, in one of the most interesting parts of England, to represent the lights and shadows of peasant life without exaggeration. The mutual good-feeling which had until then prevailed between the farmers and labourers was subjected to a severe strain during the publication of these Letters. They were written, therefore, under a deep sense of responsibility, and with an earnest desire to hold the scales evenly, and say nothing which, consistently with the facts, should widen the breach between classes whose solid English qualities win for both of them, on acquaintance, the highest respect.

The Letters on Peasant Farming led to much controversy, and some angry comment, but were certainly prompted by no want of sympathy for the labourers, and simply record facts and experiences which sympathy, unhappily, can do little to alter or to soften. No doubt, the rule to which they point, like all other rules, has exceptions, depending on the character of the cultivator, the nature of the soil, and varying local circumstances.

The difficulties of farming are treated in some detail. Bare justice to the British farmer suggests that, while the claims of his labourers are properly recognised, townspeople should also bear in mind what modern farming is, the capital it requires, the

competition it has to face, the risks it must run, and the moderate profits which await even successful enterprise in this calling.

Any passages in the Letters of mere passing interest have been omitted from this volume. On the other hand, the fresh matter introduced in the Notes will, it is hoped, form a useful commentary upon the text. In the Appendix are given some specimens of the poetry and art which were enlisted on the labourer's side during the agitation.

ELM COURT, TEMPLE,

July 1875.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

	PAGE
Origin of Trade-Unionism in East Anglia—Demand of higher wages, September 1872—Newmarket Farmers' Association formed, October 1872—Objects and rules—Union agitation in Essex and Suffolk—Farmers' Defence Association at Sudbury—Spring of 1873—First agricultural lock-out in Eastern Counties—Success of farmers—Rate of wages—Exning—Another circular—Further demand, February 1874—Strike—Lock-out by Newmarket farmers—Bishop of Manchester's letter—Reply by Mr R. Temple—Sir E. Kerrison—The Lincolnshire League (Federal Union)—Strikes and lock-out in Lincolnshire,	i

CHAPTER I.

Behaviour of the labourers—Confidence of farmers—They put their hands to the plough—Complaints of bad work—Dullingham—Stetchworth—Beer—Cheveley—A Union pay-day—Wages—Perquisites—Overtime—Amusements of men—Exning—Allotments—Schools—Cottages—Education—Influence of clergy—Piece-work—Meetings of farmers and labourers—Arbitration, difficulty in the way of—Benefit society in Suffolk—Burwell—Coprolite-diggings—Prices of stock—Rent of allotments—Village clubs, . . .	23
--	----

CHAPTER II.

Determination of farmers—The old labourers—Results of lock-out—West Suffolk Farmers' Defence Association—The Lincolnshire rules—West-thorpe—Master and men: a conference—Villages	
---	--

around Bury St Edmunds—Farming as an occupation—Return of migrating labourers—Area of lock-out limited—Actual earnings—Often not known by men themselves,	51
---	----

CHAPTER III.

Settlement proposed by the Speaker—Rejected by the farmers—The Duke of Rutland's address to the labourers—The West Suffolk Farmers' Association—Feeling against arbitration—The labour difficulty overcome—Change in course of husbandry—Labourers' meeting—Speech by Mr Ball—The strike in the Wilford Hundred—Wages—Delegates—The Union at Hoxne—Speech by Sir Edward Kerrison,	78
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

Thetford—Wages—Long hirings—"Egging" by labourers—Poaching—Farmers' meeting at Bury St Edmunds—Enclosure of commons—Farmers and labourers in Norfolk—Norfolk Defence Association—Speech by Lord Walsingham—"Haysel"—The beginning of the end,	109
---	-----

CHAPTER V.

Labourers "pilgrimage"—Start from Newmarket—Cambridge—Reception at Sheffield—Speech by Mr Arch—Fall in price of stock—Losses of farmers—East Anglian Farmers' Association—Beginning of harvest—Disappointment of locked-out labourers—Crops in East Suffolk—Difficulties in farming light land in dry seasons—Returned "pilgrims"—End of the struggle—Union allowances stopped—The old men—Emigration—Speech by Mr H. Taylor—His defence of Labourers' Unions—Delusions among the labourers—Statement by Committee of National Union—The men settle down to work—Alleged understocking of farms,	132
--	-----

CHAPTER VI.

The strike and lock-out reviewed—Notice served by men in the Wilford Hundred—Its treatment by employers—Case of the farmers stated—Misrepresentations of delegates—A farmer's reply to his men—The issue chosen by farmers—Labourers'	
---	--

Contents.

xi

claims should have been dealt with on their merits—Farmers opposed to any Union—Dimensions of the struggle—Proportion of men and employers engaged—Both classes disunited—Probable spread of Unionism—Wise to make the best of it—Inflammatory language of Union leaders and newspapers—The Union cause thereby injured—A costly luxury—Moderation essential to future success—Results of struggle, 159

CHAPTER VII.

Some East Suffolk villages—Stradbroke—Schools—Benefit clubs—Wages—Food—The Union—Migration to the large towns—Poor-rates—Education—Oakley—Sir E. Kerrison's estate—The allotment system—Its advantages—Size of allotments—Rents—Small farms—Cottages—Over-crowding—Plan for preventing, on Oakley estate—Brundish—A peasant's home—Wilby—A wretched family—Cottages with one bedroom—Difficulty of providing requisite accommodation, 181

CHAPTER VIII.

Remarks on cottage accommodation continued—Preference for the village—Home-clinging—Squatters—Henham—The Stradbroke estate—Village water-supply—Suffolk peasantry—Their tidy homes—Their civility—Home baking and brewing—The malt-tax—Cottages and gardens—Rent—Allotments—Prizes for garden and allotment cultivation—School—Coal and clothing clubs—Lord Rendlesham's estate—Allotments, situation of—Cottages—Lodgers—Decent dwellings—Not always appreciated—Pig-keeping—Sanitary precautions—Cottage property unremunerative—Instance of—Extra earnings—Hirings wet or dry—Old times—Town and country—Rents in, contrasted—Rural comforts and advantages—Reluctance to forfeit them, 198

CHAPTER IX.

The Shaftesbury Park estate—Rentals there—Advantages of occupiers—Farm-labourers' cottages contrasted—Cost of construction—Return to landlord—Cottage rentals should be remunerative—Under-rented cottages—A supplement to wages—Practical illustration—Contributed by landowner or farmer?—Dilapidated

cottages—Result of inadequate rentals—Anomalous relations caused by, between landowner, farmer, and labourer—Inequality of system as it affects labourers—Improved cottage accommodation—Best means of providing—Cottage building—Isolated dwellings—Disadvantage of,	213
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

Farm-labourers' perquisites—Beer—Its temptations—Irish abstemiousness—A harvest "frolic"—Harvest hours and labour—Gleaning—Rabbits caught in corn—Summer and winter—Unequal work rendered in—Wages of old men—Often not earned—Equivalent to pensions—Provision for old age—Conditions of rural society—Labourer's "independence" necessarily a qualified one—Neighbourly help in trouble—Wine and medical comforts—Taken as of course—Labourers' medical clubs—Tried in Grantham Union—Suggested by Sir E. Kerrison in East Anglia—Their effect upon poor's-rate—Rate-supported dispensaries in Ireland—Self-help better—Family earnings—Actual wages of farm-labourers in money and kind—Attempt to estimate—System of payment in Eastern Counties—Harvest-wages—Fixed regular wages preferable—With long hirings—Bright side of peasant life—"Pilgrimage" suggested, by town labourers to country,	229
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

Peasant farming—A small cultivator—Ill-requited toil—Craving for more land—Small farms—Increased production not necessarily profitable—Gold bought too dearly—Market-gardening, intelligence essential for—Statistics of small holdings—A Cambridge-shire parish—Other occupations than farming—A four-acre cultivator—Life a hard struggle—A shepherd—Early experiences—Hardships of farm-service—Parishes in Suffolk—"Two strings to the bow"—Crops on small holdings—Casualties to stock—Losses and anxieties—Story of another small cultivator—His difficulties—The seasons—Cows—Manuring,	250
--	-----

CHAPTER XII.

Peasant farming continued—Case of John Sillett—Shop apprentice—Haberdasher—Taste for rural life—Cobbett's 'Cottage Economy'

—A risky experiment—Breaking up pasture—The National Land Company—A two-acre freehold—Statement of produce—Sillett no "peasant farmer"—Exceptional advantages—Frugality—Farm-buildings—Husbandman contrasted with tradesman—Relative independence—Small farms—Woodbridge—"The Walks"—Waste land—How far available for cultivation—A peasant's opinion—A farmer's expostulation—Unprofitable crops—Heathland—Unfit for ploughing—Value of, for pasture—Stock-keeping—Food results of peasant-holdings—Small farms often badly farmed—And unremunerative—Struggles of small farmers—Average extent of holdings,	274
---	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

Farming in East Anglia—Piece-work—The Knettishall farm—Ploughing—Arbitration as to piece-work, difficulties of—Haysel—Hoeing—The gang system—The turnip crop—Overtime—Extra work—Sometimes distasteful—Harvesting—Harvest agreement—A commonwealth of labour—"Lord of the harvest"—Emulation in work—Horses—Beer-drinking—Consumption during harvest—Sheep-shearing—A close companionship—Earnings shared unequally—System of wage-paying—Drilling—Vipers and rats—Other piece-work—Liberal scale of payments necessary—Special contracts—Wages in Norfolk one hundred years ago—Old labour difficulties—Piece-work common—Cost of—Old Norfolk customs,	294
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

Farming in East Anglia—Fluctuations in wages—Yield of corn—Price—Influence of seasons—Partial reduction in wages—Crop of 1874—Chief sources of outlay in farming—Rent—Tithes—Rates—Labour—Manure—An acre of wheat—Cost of cultivating—Present value—Outlay on farm of 780 acres—Labour Bill—Nominal weekly wages during fifty-eight years—Labourers' actual wages—Farm of 200 acres—Profits—Wages around Newmarket—Farm of 950 acres—Machinery—Increased outlay for manual labour—Wages—Increase of stock kept—Partly accounts for increased cost of labour—Cropping—Sainfoin—Results of labour disputes on husbandry,	317
--	-----

CHAPTER XV.

Farming outlay—Further details—Profits—Losses in stock-keeping	
—Agricultural returns—Cattle and sheep in Eastern Counties—	
Other counties compared—Wales and Scotland—Parochial relief	
—Poor-law expenditure—Sanitary provision in villages—Work-	
paper — Outdoor relief — Newmarket Union — Expenditure—	
Average price of wheat — Rural population — Transfer of, to	
towns — Excess of births over deaths — Education — Leads to	
migration—Village clubs,	335
APPENDIX,	355

THE AGRICULTURAL LOCK-OUT OF 1874.

INTRODUCTION.

ORIGIN OF TRADE-UNIONISM IN EAST ANGLIA—DEMAND OF HIGHER WAGES, SEPTEMBER 1872—NEWMARKET FARMERS' ASSOCIATION FORMED, OCTOBER 1872—OBJECTS AND RULES—UNION AGITATION IN ESSEX AND SUFFOLK—FARMERS' DEFENCE ASSOCIATION AT SUDBURY—SPRING OF 1873—FIRST AGRICULTURAL LOCK-OUT IN EASTERN COUNTIES—SUCCESS OF FARMERS—RATE OF WAGES—EXNING—ANOTHER CIRCULAR—FURTHER DEMAND, FEBRUARY 1874—STRIKE—LOCK-OUT BY NEWMARKET FARMERS—BISHOP OF MANCHESTER'S LETTER—REPLY BY MR R. TEMPLE—SIR E. KERRISON—THE LINCOLNSHIRE LEAGUE (FEDERAL UNION)—STRIKES AND LOCK-OUT IN LINCOLNSHIRE.

SOME preliminary sketch of the Union agitation in the Eastern counties is necessary to explain the narrative which follows. The National Agricultural Labourers' Union was established at Leamington in May 1872. The movement, begun by Mr Arch, soon extended to East Anglia; and in some districts the men joined the Union in considerable numbers. After harvest, in the autumn of 1872, notices were served upon many employers; and the following

written notice, signed by seventeen labourers, was received by farmers in Exning, a Suffolk parish on the borders of Cambridgeshire :—

“EXNING, *September 26, 1872.*

“SIR,—We, the undersigned, do hereby jointly and severally agree to call your attention to the following requirements for our labour—namely, fourteen shillings for a week’s work, and no longer to conform with the system of breakfasting before going to work during the winter quarter.

“Hoping you will give this your consideration, and meet our moderate requirements amicably.—Your humble servants,

* * * *

This demand would not perhaps, of itself, have alarmed the farmers. The frequent visits and speeches of the Union delegates, however, and the growth of Union sentiments and influence in the villages, gave the Exning notice a look of coming trouble. A few Cambridgeshire and Suffolk farmers around Newmarket therefore convened a meeting for the purpose of conferring upon the best mode of dealing with this communication. On the 15th of October 1872 the farmers assembled at Newmarket, and resolved to form an Association, with the following objects :—

“1. To raise a fund to enable members of the Association to meet any emergency which may arise between employers and employed, or otherwise. 2. To agree upon the maximum rate of wages to be paid. 3. To provide facility of communication between employers of agricultural labour and those in their employ, and for other purposes that may arise.”

The committee appointed at this meeting came to the conclusion that it was "most undesirable, and in fact impracticable, to fix a maximum rate of wages," and recommended instead that the Association should merely try "to obtain a uniform rate so far as is practicable." The rules drawn up by the committee were agreed to by the Newmarket Association with this amendment, November 12, 1872. The preamble recited that "it is desirable, in consideration of the altered circumstances and conditions of agricultural labour, and especially in consideration of the formation of Unions among agricultural labourers, that an Association, to be called the Agricultural Association, be formed, having for its objects:—

"To take joint and common instead of individual action in all matters relating to labour, and having a mutual interest. 2. To raise a fund to enable members of the Association to meet any emergency that may arise between employers and employed, or otherwise. 3. To agree upon a uniform rate of wages to be paid as far as practicable. 4. To provide facility of communication between employers of agricultural labour and those in their employ, and for other purposes that may arise, with a view to preserving good feeling, by discouraging agitation, and generally ameliorating the conditions of labour."

An entrance fee of 10s., and a subscription equal to 1½d. in the pound on the rateable value of the assessment to poor-rate, were the terms of membership, the Association being of course limited to farmers and other employers of agricultural labour; and one of the rules enacted "that no member shall make any general alteration in the rate of wages he is at any time paying to his labourers, nor any other general alteration in the terms

upon which he engages his labourers, without previously giving the committee due notice thereof, and acting in concert with them."

On the whole, the rules adopted and the objects avowed by the farmers in their new organisation were reasonable and conciliatory. Moreover, it was an organisation obviously called forth by the combined movement among the labourers, and the probable need for a common stand against aggression. At this time the Newmarket farmers seem to have had no thought of locking out, nor did the men then strike in the district. Elsewhere, however, peace was not preserved. At about the same period, after harvest in 1872, notices of substantially the same character were received by farmers in Essex and on the borders of Suffolk; and strikes occurred, though not simultaneously, in the parishes of Weatherfield, Sible Hedingham, Newton, Boxted, Finchingfield, Cavendish, Glemsford, and other places. The result was the formation, in October 1872, of "the Essex and Suffolk Farmers' Defence Association," of which Mr James S. Gardiner, of Borley Lodge, Sudbury, was chairman; Mr G. P. Weybrew, secretary; and Mr W. Mills, treasurer. Their rules were more aggressive than those of the Newmarket Association. For example, by Rule 4 "the Association pledges itself to render every possible help and assistance to its members in cases of strikes taking place amongst the labourers employed by them, supposing they are paying the customary wages of the parish in which such strike takes place." Rule 5 also says "that the members of the Association shall not in any way acknowledge the Labourers' Union by entering into any contract with such Union, or employ a unionist on strike without the consent of the acting committee."

One of the notices now in my possession, and served upon an employer at Sible and Castle Hedingham in 1872, seems to have justified the Essex farmers at that time in supposing that they had to do, not so much with their own labourers, or even with the local branch, as with the central organisation of the Union at Leamington. It is a printed circular with a heading which sets forth the title of the "National Agricultural Union;" the address of the central offices at Leamington; the names of the central committee, the officers, and trustees: and it has all the appearance of a common form of notice-paper issued under the authority of the central committee. The dates are left in blank. So also is the amount of increase in wages to be demanded, with the name of the branch committee:—

"November 6, 1872.

"DEAR SIR,—The agricultural labourers of this branch of the National Agricultural Union in your employ beg respectfully to inform you that on and after Friday they will require a rise in their wages from 20d. to 26d. per day, and a general conformity to their rules, a copy of which we enclose.

"Being desirous of retaining good relations between employer and employed, and to assure you that no unbecoming feelings prompt us to such a course, we invite you (if our terms are not in accordance with your views) to appoint an early time to meet us, so that we may fairly consider the matter, and arrange our affairs amicably.—
Your obedient servants,

"THE COMMITTEE,
North Essex Branch."

Many similar notices were served upon other employers in the district. An address was given, apparently with a view to any communication which the farmers might be disposed to open up, and the name filled in with ink here was "Charles Jay, Honorary President, Cadham Hall, near Braintree." The printed form contemplated a demand for an increase of weekly wages, but by a manuscript correction the request was made for an increase in the daily rate of pay, which would have raised the weekly wages from 10s. to 13s. A copy of the rules was at the same time enclosed for the farmer's information. These rules are prefaced by an address to the members, which is interesting, for reasons obvious on the face of it, and also as being the first address of its kind made after the Leamington Union was established :—

"In submitting to their brethren the rules of the 'National Agricultural Labourers' Union,' the members of the 'National Executive Committee' have added certain supplementary rules for the use of districts and branches. These rules are not regarded by the National Executive as exhaustive, but simply as fundamental. It is felt that districts and branches should have perfect liberty to frame such laws for their own guidance as their own special circumstances may suggest. That liberty is freely accorded, and the National Executive hope it will be exercised on the basis of the rules for districts and branches, and in harmony with the general rules of the National. The National Executive hopes soon to see a branch Union in every parish, and a district Union—that is, a combination of branches—in every county or division, all communicating with a common centre, all observing the same

principles, and all working for the same end. In the early stages of our movement let the branch and district meetings be frequent, that enthusiasm may be kept alive, information be dispersed, and the Union be perfected. We must have no local jealousies, no self-seeking, no isolation. Unity of action is above all things necessary; and this can be secured only as all the branches and districts work through a common representative and executive committee. We must have money, and we must have it in one central fund, to which all shall contribute, and from which, in time of need, all shall in turn be aided. The strength of the great trade societies is in their central funds. If we have a balance here and another there, it will be simply impossible to support a number of men in any emergency that may arise. We must have a common treasury large enough, through the payments of all, to support the demands that may be made in the interest of all.

“The funds of a branch or district would soon be exhausted if a number of men were thrown upon them; but the national fund—the fund of all—would be rich enough to meet any demands which the National Executive might entertain, and to support our members through any crisis. Let it be clearly understood, then, that the branch remits its funds to the district; that the districts remit three-fourths of their receipts to the National; and that any branch or district failing to do this has no claim whatever on the general resources of the Union. The fourth allowed to be retained by the districts can be disbursed at the discretion of the district committee, in meeting current expenditure and in promoting the general objects of the Union. For the working expenses of branches an incidental fund

is recommended, which may easily be realised by a small payment from each member. Our movement has begun well. Success is, under God, in our own hands. Let us cleave to, and work for, the Union. Let peace and moderation mark all our meetings. Let courtesy, fairness, and firmness characterise all our demands. Act cautiously and advisedly, that no act may have to be repented or repudiated. Do not strike unless all other means fail you. Try all other means. Try them with firmness and patience—try them in the enforcement of only just claims; and if they all fail, then strike, and, having observed Rule 10, strike with a will. Fraternise, centralise! With brotherly feeling, with a united front, with every district welded into a great whole, with a common fund to which all shall pay, and on which all shall have the right to draw, the time will not be distant when every agricultural labourer shall have, what few as yet have enjoyed, a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Nine and a half hours, exclusive of meal-times, as a day's work, and 16s. as a week's pay, are not extravagant demands. Society supports you in making them, and they will be met soon. Brothers, be united, and you will be strong; be temperate, and you will be respected; realise a central capital, and you will be able to act with firmness and independence. Many eyes are upon you; many tongues are ready to reproach you; your opponents say that your extra leisure will be passed in the public-house, and your extra pay spent in beer. Show that their slander is untrue! Be united, be sober, and you will soon be free!

(Signed) "JOSEPH ARCH,
*Chairman of the National
Executive Committee."*

There is much in this document with which every one must sympathise. From the farmers' point of view, however, supposing that they were giving the market rate of wages, Mr Arch's manifesto showed that the Union meant to try to force up the existing rate, by means of combination, to 16s., at the same time diminishing hours of labour. The 10s. which, according to the foregoing notice, was paid by an individual employer in Essex, was a low rate of wages in itself, and low also contrasted with the minimum wages prevailing elsewhere in the Eastern counties. It will be seen presently that the Essex and Suffolk farmers in this district did not recognise 10s. as the normal rate of wages.

Active warfare began in the spring of 1873. On the 17th of April 1873 the farmers met at Sudbury, the headquarters of the Essex and Suffolk Association, and passed the following resolutions: "That the members of the Association pledge themselves not to pay more than 2s. per day of twelve hours, including breakfast and dinner, for day-work. That in the opinion of this meeting the members of this Association should resist the interference of the National Labourers' Union by discharging the men in their employ belonging to the said Union, after giving them a week's notice to withdraw." The leading farmers in the district who belonged to the Association acted upon this appeal; the men as a rule clung to the Union;* and

* "Dissenters," writes a farmer, "were almost universally the chief propagandists of the Union. Wherever in my district there was the most Dissent, there also were the most Unionists and the greatest tenacity. The propagandists were itinerant preachers, mostly labourers, who on Sundays travel from village to village, and in fine weather address the people on village greens or other open spaces, and in bad weather preach in the Primitive Methodist chapel, or some hired room."

the result was the first agricultural lock-out in the Eastern counties. The farmers appealed to the landowners to help them in resisting the Labourers' Union, urging that the landowner's and the occupier's interest was one upon this question; that if labour could not be obtained at a fair and reasonable rate, land must go out of cultivation or be badly farmed, while it would decrease in value, and by the non-cultivation of roots the price of meat would be raised; and lastly, that this was a communistic movement, and one which, if not "stopped in its infancy," would "lead to confiscation of property, tearing down all rights except the might of the masses." The answer to this appeal was not encouraging. The farmers here, as afterwards around Newmarket, had to fight their own battle. It was indeed a battle in which landowners, however disposed to help their tenants, could do little more than look on: the result depended chiefly upon the organisation and determination of the farmers themselves.* In this instance they were completely successful. The lock-out extended over an area of about 18 miles by 14; and after the resolution of April 1873, about a thousand men were locked out, while many others gave up their tickets† and continued in their em-

* "The great landowners," says a farmer, "did not answer our appeal. The backbone of our Association consisted of men who farm their own land, along with land belonging to others—owning, say, from 100 to 1000 acres. As owners and occupiers, accustomed to look at things from both points of view, we had to measure the strength of our opponents; and we did so without fearing the action of labourers, or the lukewarmness of landlords. We found many tenant-farmers afraid to join us for fear of giving offence to their landlords, though they were glad enough to see the cudgels taken up by us."

† The Union ticket is inscribed, "National Agricultural Labourers' Union. Member's Contribution Card." Four lines below are left for the member's name and number, the name of the branch, the dis-

ployment. The funds of the Union, then in its infancy, were severely taxed.* The lock-out was not recognised or supported by the farmers in other parts of East Anglia, though the Essex and Suffolk Association urged kindred organisations elsewhere to adopt it. Some of the members suffered from a want of labour, but only until after hay-time in 1873. The resolve to dispense with Union hands was generally kept; and the men, on their side, seem to have suffered more than their employers.

"Many labourers who went northward in search of work," says an employer in this district, "returned with illusions dispelled, telling others of the hardships they had undergone, and convinced that higher pay often means greater poverty." In the end the labourers who did not emigrate or migrate left the Union and came back to work, or their places were filled up. The farmers had tided over their difficulty.†

tract in which it is situated, and the signature of the secretary. On the reverse side are columns for "contributions," "fines," and "levies," arranged so as to include a year's fortnightly payments under each of these heads.

* "So many were thrown on the National Union," says a farmer, "that the relief pay was not continued for more than four or five weeks."

† "Without detracting from the deserts of the Newmarket farmers," writes a member of the Essex and Suffolk Association, "and fully recognising their determination and success in fighting the Union, it is due to us to remember that at the time of their lock-out our pioneer Association had already shown the way to victory. In other districts the farmers were for a long time lotus-eating. They temporised in the early stages of the movement, while we were in fierce conflict; and when the storm afterwards burst upon them, we were scudding along under easy sail." Here, as elsewhere, it will be understood that I give the language and opinions of correspondents without necessarily endorsing either.

It is so far creditable to the Essex and Suffolk farmers to find that, after their victory was won, they resolved (March 19, 1874) to rescind the resolution passed the year before, pledging the members of the Association not to exceed 12s. a-week for day-work; and it was understood that each member should be "at liberty to pay such wages as were general in the parish in which he occupied any land." In East Suffolk and in parts of Norfolk this Union agitation had by this time led to partial strikes and frequent demands, and often reasonable demands, for increased wages. In the spring of 1873 the Exning labourers came again to the front, claiming a rise of 3s. a-week and a readjustment of hours of labour, though the change they proposed in the latter respect was not specified. The following (printed) circular was sent to the Exning employers:—

" March 1, 1873.

" DEAR SIR,—The agricultural labourers of this branch of the National Agricultural Union in your employ beg respectfully to inform you that, on and after March 7, they will require a rise in their wages of 3s. a-week—a week's work to consist of hours. Being desirous of retaining good relations between employers and employed, and to assure you that no unbecoming feelings prompt us to such a course, we invite you (if our terms are not in accordance with your views) to appoint an early time to meet us, so that we may fairly consider the matter and arrange our affairs amicably.—Your obedient servants,

" THE COMMITTEE,
Exning Branch."

It will be observed, that this notice is almost identical

with the one given in 1872 in Essex. At this time, as also when the first "notice" was given by the Exning men, their wages were 12s. a-week. The circular of March 1, 1873, was laid before a committee of the Newmarket Agricultural Association by the employers who had received it; and as it bore no signature, a decision was come to that no notice should be taken of it. A resolution, however, was passed at a full meeting of the Association to raise wages to 13s., from March 15, 1873. *Post hoc propter hoc.* The men accepted this increase, naturally attributing it to the influence of the Union, in spite of the farmers' repudiation. Work was therefore resumed as usual. Nothing further was done on either side until February 28, 1874, when the men demanded, in the same way, a rise of 1s. in their weekly wages, and "struck," after the usual week's notice, when their demand was again ignored or rejected, their minimum weekly pay being then 13s., with extras. On March 10 the Newmarket farmers held a general meeting, at which resolutions were come to that no other alteration should be made, either in the rate of wages or the hours of labour. Further, they resolved, on the ground that they might otherwise be beaten in detail, "that all Union men be locked out, after giving one week's notice, such notice to begin on the next payday of each of the members respectively, and that such lock-out continue so long as the men continue on strike." In conformity with this resolution, all Union labourers employed by members of the Association were dismissed; and at a subsequent meeting, held March 24, the farmers passed the following further resolution: "That, taking into consideration the inflammatory and abusive language used by the delegates of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union at their meetings in the neighbourhood, and the

persecutions to which labourers who are not members of the Union are daily subjected, the members of this Association shall not in future employ any men to work for them who are members of the Union."

The men were locked out on the 21st of March, three weeks after the strike. Little attention had been aroused outside the district by the lock-out in North Essex and Suffolk. But soon after the lock-out around Newmarket became known, great personages mingled in the fray. The Bishop of Manchester asked, "Are the farmers of England going mad?" "Can they," he continued, "suppose that this suicidal lock-out, which has already thrown 4000 labourers on the fund of the Agricultural Union, will stave off for any appreciable time the solution of the inevitable question, What is the equitable wage to pay the men? The most frightful thing that could happen for English society would be a peasants' war. Yet that is what we are driving to, if insane counsels of mutual exasperation prevail."* This letter was as the beginning of strife, at least in the newspapers. A host of correspondents entered the lists against the Bishop, Mr R. Temple replied † to Dr Fraser's points one by one:—

"1. 'Are the farmers of England going mad?' Not necessarily madder in their lock-out than the peasants in their strike. The strike is a legitimate weapon of attack; the lock-out of defence. Which is the stronger, time, not prophecy, will show. At any rate, the labourers began.

"2. 'The inevitable question, What is the equitable wage?' What labour will fetch in the market. Acts of Parliament in days gone by failed to create a legal wage, and impassioned rhetoric at present will as surely fail to fix

* The Times, April 2, 1874.

† Ibid., April 8.

an equitable wage. No man is bound to give more for a commodity than it is worth, be that commodity ploughs or ploughmen. Moreover, if there is an equitable *minimum* there should be an equitable *maximum*, and the workman would most reasonably object to that.

“3. ‘A disturbance of the equilibrium of the labour market.’ Has the Bishop forgotten *Æsop*? Does he remember the wolf and the lamb? The labourers have been striking for months; and now, because at last the farmers resort to necessary defence, they ‘disturb the equilibrium of the labour market.’ It was the peasant who destroyed the balance by throwing into his scale the sword of agitation.

“4. ‘Every one must have noticed that the language of the leaders of the movement, at first studiously moderate, has become more violent, and in some cases insurrectionary and menacing.’ That is, as long as a man is reasonable let him alone; but when he turns ruffian, traitor, and incendiary, give him what he wants. The farmers are madder than the Bishop thinks them if they are frightened into paying more for labour than it is worth.

“5. ‘A peasants’ war.’ I confess I think no more of this threat than of Mr Chowler’s black flag of 1846; but the way to keep the peace is certainly not to make the peasant think himself a tragic victim when he is only acting the prosaic part of an ordinary mortal who, like most men, wants higher pay and will take it if he can get it.

“6. ‘Can a man, at the present prices of the necessities of life, maintain himself and his family?’ Coals and meat are dear, chiefly through the prosperity of the working class; but bread, tea, sugar, and clothing are much cheaper than they were forty years ago: so that I think a

labourer's expenses are rather less, on the whole, than they were then, while his wages have risen from 8s. per week to 13s., 14s., or 15s., and he is the only man in the country who gets better dwellings, at least on all large estates, with no increase of rent.

"7. 'If farmers can prove the truth of the statement that they cannot afford to pay this rate of wages with their present rentals, rents must come down—an unpleasant thing to contemplate for those who will spend the rent of a 300-acre farm on a single ball or a pair of high-stepping horses.' Rents will fall if the demand for land diminishes; if it increases they will rise. There is no more an 'equitable rental' than there is 'an equitable wage.' As to the rest of this passage, I suppose the Bishop is hardly prepared to say that a man who can afford to give a ball or buy a horse, and does what he can afford, is a grievous sinner; or to deny that no class was ever more munificent in its charities than the higher class in England is now. Be this so or not, he will, I hope, forgive me for saying that this talk about balls and horses is *nihil ad rem*.

"8. 'I am no lover of the principles of trades unionism; but they have been forced upon the working classes by the inequitable use of the power of capital.' When, where, and how? Capitalists have wisely sought to buy labour cheap; workmen have wisely sought to sell it dear. Trades-unions are not objects of love or hate; they are combinations of men who want more money than they have got. They are perfectly legitimate and natural; they are neither praiseworthy, wicked, nor heroic. On a like footing stands the combination of employers; and I cannot for the life of me see why the farmer is the only man in England who is to be called almost a felon, and quite a madman, because

to the legitimate attack of a strike he opposes the legitimate defence of a lock-out."

Mr John Algonon Clarke pointed out that, while Dr Fraser had volunteered his opinion that the minimum wage per man anywhere should be 15s. or 16s. per week, in North Lincolnshire men who were receiving 18s. per week had struck for 21s. Lady Stradbroke also wrote that Suffolk agricultural labourers had been offered 17s. and 18s. a-week all the year round, and had declined the offer ; * reminded the Bishop of the low-rented cottages, and other advantages which supplement wages in the Eastern counties ; and complained that his letter tended to promote strife and dissension.

The Bishop of Manchester, in a longer letter,† reaffirmed his belief that the policy pursued by the East Anglian farmers was " ill-advised and suicidal," though he admitted that the demand of the Lincolnshire labourers for an advance of 3s. a-week (from 18s. to 21s.) was " immoderate and unreasonable." He still, however, held, with Mr Brassey, to the possibility of " an equitable scheme of prices " for labour. " The apostle knew what he was talking of when he said, ' Masters, give unto your servants that which is *just and equal* ; ' while another principle of his, ' The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits, ' expresses a law of natural equity which we have too often inverted. If it be not only true, as Mr Temple says, and as I do not wish to deny, that ' the strike is a legitimate weapon of attack, the lock-out of defence, ' but we must wait patiently and calmly to see ' which time will show to be the stronger, ' I can foresee nothing but disaster, and indeed ruin, to thousands of homes, both of farmers and labourers, as the ultimate issue of the struggle."

* The Times, April 16.

† Ibid., April 14.

The war of words went on at great length, but the only other letter which need be reproduced is one by Sir Edward Kerrison,* of whom the Bishop of Manchester afterwards wrote, from his experience as an Assistant Commissioner in the Agricultural Inquiry of 1867—"There is no one who, as a resident landowner on a great estate, which he watches over with the most judicious care, has a greater right to be heard in this matter." The following was Sir Edward's contribution to the controversy:—

"In a desert of strikes and locks-out, my property forms a sort of oasis. In Suffolk, for many miles surrounding it, general locks-out have either taken place or are impending; but in Norfolk, two miles from my house, an unasked-for increase of wages has within the last week been given. I venture, as one of the few landlords in the district, the views of whose tenants as a body are in unison with his own as to the general inexpediency of locks-out where no advance of wages has been demanded, to make some suggestions upon the present state of things.

"It is evident to us that unless some steps can be devised to put an end to the internecine war now raging in the Eastern counties between employers and employed, some of the best bread-producing land in the kingdom will be left without labour to cultivate it, and the question now agitating the district thus assumes a national aspect. The farmers wage war against the Agricultural Unions, but, so far as I can judge, without making any serious attempt to obtain a modification of the rules by which those associations are governed. Farming cannot be carried on successfully without a continuous supply of labour at all seasons of the year, and cannot be left liable to the arbitrary action

* The Times, April 18.

which those rules have set in motion against farmers. One rule, which vests all power of ordering strikes at a week's notice in the executive, should be altered before arbitration can be successful. At least one month's notice in writing should be given by either party to the other in case of an advance or lowering of wages being thought necessary. To obviate the unjust system of striking at farmers in detail, a district (which in a county consisting of small parishes like this should not be less than five parishes) ought alone to have the power of action. In case no agreement can be come to, reference might be had to a system of arbitration, to be established upon an agreed basis in each county, or possibly district. The grounds for any change should be set forth in writing by those desiring it.

“Men should be paid by the hour or by piece-work, with the exception of special harvest arrangements, when higher wages are always paid.

“It seems to me that if these—which I believe to be the principal points at issue—can be adjusted, there is no reason why immediate arbitration should not take place, under which smaller matters of detail might be arranged. The Eastern counties locks-out have been directed principally against those who have advised action upon the objectionable rules, and I believe that if these rules are modified, agricultural Unions may proceed in amicable relations with employers, and without the necessity of resorting to extra-neous agency. The whole labour question, as now existing, must be divested of all those benevolent or charitable adjuncts which, with the most praiseworthy but most mistaken views, are imported into it; they only divert attention from the real question at issue, that of wages, which of necessity must henceforth be based upon *commercial* principles.

"I have the authority of the farmers on my property to say that the working men employed by them, whether members of Unions or not, have throughout these trying times conducted themselves in the most satisfactory manner. I write this in the confident hope that enlightened public opinion will assist those who are endeavouring to deal fairly with the working-man, and who, while desirous of avoiding locks-out and strikes, object to some of the present rules of the agricultural Unions, which, in their opinion, are calculated to act alike injuriously to the interests of Unionists as to those of farmers."

In East Suffolk and parts of Lincolnshire a lock-out was resorted to by the farmers at about the same time as that begun around Newmarket. In Lincolnshire, and Norfolk and Suffolk, many of the labourers in union belonged to the Lincolnshire League, a branch of the Federal Union; and on April 9th, the general secretary of this League reported that about 2000 members would be locked out at the end of the current week, while many more soon expected to be in the same position. Appeals were issued to the public, and subscriptions from private persons and from workmen's Unions in the towns flowed in freely. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers alone voted £1000, and the public subscriptions were apportioned equally between both Unions in proportion to the number of locked-out members. This apportionment was effected by means of a committee of subscribers: the National and Federal Executives did not act in unison, and indeed from the first appeared to be at variance.

The total cost of the lock-out to the National Labourers' Union may be gathered from the following authentic list of grants made to various districts by the

Central Executive at Leamington, between the months of
March and August 1874 :—

Newmarket (Exning) District,	£14,984 10 7
Wisbech,	1,550 0 0
Bedford,	980 0 0
Halstead, Essex,	1,460 0 0
Sawston, Cambs,	1,931 0 0
Market Rasen, Lincoln,	858 0 0
Luton,	162 0 0
Aylesbury,	205 0 0
Old Buckenham, Norfolk,	585 0 0
Norwich,	135 0 0
E. Dereham,	205 0 0
Wolverton,	256 0 0
Banbury,	283 0 0
Spalding,	59 0 0
Dorset,	400 0 0
Market Harborough,	164 0 0
Andover,	90 0 0
Farringdon,	85 0 0
Alton,	40 0 0
	<hr/>
	£24,432 10 7

But these figures do not represent the whole expenditure, as some of the districts used the receipts of the branches, in addition to the grants from the National Executive, though such an application of money is contrary to the rules.

According to the 'Labourers Union Chronicle' (October 24, 1874), the total number of men locked out belonging to the National Union was 3116, of whom 694 migrated, 429 emigrated, 415 were then still unemployed, 402 left the Union, "and 1176 went back to work retaining their Union cards." It is difficult to reconcile the last statement with the facts. The men may possibly have continued their allegiance to the Union in secret, but it

is idle to suppose that employers would have dispensed with Union labour during 18 weeks, including harvest-time, and then have knowingly surrendered the whole principle for which they had been contending by taking back Union men when the Union funds were exhausted. The farmers must at any rate have supposed that the men had ceased their connection with the Union. As to the number of men belonging to the Federal Union who were locked out, Mr Banks, the general secretary of the Lincolnshire and Suffolk Federal districts, at a meeting of trade delegates in London, held April 21, said that about 6000 labourers were locked out in the Eastern counties, of whom about 2500 were members of the Federal Union. The totals here given seem to be exaggerated; and indeed the leaders of each Union charged the others with exaggerating the number of their locked-out members. On May 23, Mr Banks told the Executive Council of the Federal Union that the whole number of Federal labourers locked out in Lincolnshire did not exceed 130; while in Suffolk and the neighbouring districts the number of Federal labourers then locked out, after deducting those who had migrated, emigrated, and found other work, was 1318. Mr Shipton, the general secretary of the Federal Union, afterwards visited the lock-out districts in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, and reported to the council on June 3 that the total number of Federal labourers locked out was 829; children (?), 810: and the total amount paid in relief was £387, 10s. per week. It seems that the withdrawal of the lock-out in Lincolnshire only relieved the Federal funds to the extent of £60 a-week.

CHAPTER I.

BEHAVIOUR OF THE LABOURERS—CONFIDENCE OF FARMERS—THEY PUT THEIR HANDS TO THE PLOUGH—COMPLAINTS OF BAD WORK—DULLINGHAM—STETCHWORTH—BEER—CHEVELEY—A UNION PAY-DAY—WAGES—PERQUISITES—OVERTIME—AMUSEMENTS OF MEN—EXNING—ALLOTMENTS—SCHOOLS—COTTAGES—EDUCATION—INFLUENCE OF CLERGY—PIECE-WORK—MEETINGS OF FARMERS AND LABOURERS—ARBITRATION, DIFFICULTY IN THE WAY OF—BENEFIT SOCIETY IN SUFFOLK—BURWELL—COPROLITE-DIGGINGS—PRICES OF STOCK—RENT OF ALLOTMENTS—VILLAGE CLUBS.

On the whole, the conduct of the labourers throughout the lock-out was exemplary. There were isolated attempts at intimidation, and a few cases of personal violence; but considering that the lock-out extended over a great portion of the county of Suffolk, and included parts of Cambridgeshire, the men were orderly and well-behaved. Great moral pressure* was no doubt brought to bear upon non-Unionists by men who had joined the body, and still more by women. In villages men are more constantly under the influence of their fellows than in towns, have greater difficulty in escaping from the social pressure brought to bear upon them and their families,

* "The 'moral pressure' in my parish," says a farmer, "developed into stone-throwing, hooting, and other forms of annoyance. Many of our men who continued at work were afraid to go from one village to another, and quite afraid to stir out after dark."

and find it harder to live under the stigma that they are not "standing by their order." Still, moral force of this kind is a legitimate thing, against which nothing can be said.

From the first the farmers expressed no doubt of the issue of the struggle. Fortunately for them, the weather was very favourable, and agricultural work was more forward than it usually was at the same season of the year. The spring corn was in, and non-Unionists were, in some cases, conveyed in carts daily, at considerable expense, to and from distant parishes to complete the seed-sowing. Then was seen the advantage of being a practical man. Some gentlemen-farmers took again to the plough, or had a spell at other long-unaccustomed work. I found one farmer at Dullingham, who holds 700 or 800 acres, busily engaged in drilling cinquefoil, while his bailiff led the horses. It was a new experience; and happy were the farmers who were themselves able to turn their hands to the work of the farm, and whose sons did not think themselves above manual labour. The farmer I saw prided himself on having drilled his 16 acres in a day, and he had been helped in cutting turnips and in other necessary work by some young relatives, who came to his aid from a considerable distance. I afterwards met two or three of the farmers from adjacent parishes to which the lock-out had not extended, who had come over to help their neighbours, and were leading horses or doing other kinds of farm labour. One said he had been called after and jeered by some Unionists, but he took no notice of them, and they did not interfere with him further. It was impossible not to admire the courage shown by the farmers in this way; and though they were sometimes put to shifts, espe-

cially when they had sheep to fold and stock to feed, they evidently made up their minds not to be beaten. The shifts to which they were thus put showed them many ways of afterwards economising labour, and permanently diminishing the number of their hands. Their own performances with plough and harrow and drill showed them what can be done by a fair servant, who, when he does anything, does it with all his might; and while hereafter they may be more rigorous in exacting a good day's work, I think they will also be more ready when they get such work to pay for it liberally. On all sides I heard complaints by farmers of the slouching, unsatisfactory work done by a large portion of the hands they employ. They say that, comparatively low as the rate of wages is in the Eastern counties, agricultural labour is, if anything, really dearer than it is in the northern counties, because of the greater energy and efficiency of the hands there. I have myself, in Northumberland, heard a Northumbrian farmer declare that one of the strong, big-boned women who worked in his fields was worth much more than any average southern labourer.* On the other hand, there are in this district good men enough who work conscientiously and well; and one of the farmers' chief grievances against the Union was the familiar one that it makes no distinction between good and bad workers, but levels all such distinctions. A really handy man about a farm is a skilled workman of a high order; and if he be also a steady, quick

* "I protest"—so writes a farmer—"that one of the Scotchmen whom I formerly employed would do as much work as two and even three Suffolk labourers. It 'makes one's flesh creep' to see some of the latter at work. Too many of them appear anxious to do as little as possible when the eye of the master or the steward is off them."

worker, he is entitled, I think, to much higher wages than he receives here.* One advantage of the present difficulty is, that the position of such men will at all events be improved, and so it should be materially as to the stated weekly wages.

At Dullingham I found a *minimum* of 13s. paid, but in some cases the cottages were let at the nominal rent of a shilling a-week, or even let free; and piece-work often enables a good worker to earn more than his stated wage. I went over the labour-book of one farmer, and singling out a man who was nominally in receipt of 13s. weekly, found that from October 3 to March 20, a period of twenty-five weeks, he really received 25s. 3d. weekly. This man was employed in Stetchworth, an adjoining parish. He had had a good deal of piece-work, such as leading manure, digging mangel, dressing barley, and so forth; and it is only fair to add, that he had been helped in some of this piece-work by his wife and two or three of his daughters. The period I chose did not include harvest, and I was told that during five weeks of harvest this man and eight others had each made £2 a-week.

The cottages, both in Dullingham and Stetchworth, seemed very fair ones. All I saw had two bedrooms, and some had three. I went into two, newly built, at Dullingham, which had cost £300 the pair. Each contained five rooms, with offices in the rear, in which were a common

* "A really handy man," says the same farmer, "gets wages much above the nominal rate. I have been offering 18s. a-week for such, and seek them in vain. Such men command good wages. They fall in for the places on a farm to which perquisites are attached. I know one such man whose wage has been nominally the current wage of the country, but who has, so his employer asserts, earned on an average £70 a-year for the last thirty years, and he has no wife or children."

oven for baking and a copper for washing. These cottages were let to a farmer for £7, 10s. a-year each, and he let them to his men rent free. The occupiers, however, were men not quite in the position of mere labourers. Each cottage in both villages has a garden patch, and small allotments close by each village are let to the labourers. Upon these they grow potatoes, roots, or a bit of corn. In Stetchworth there is a school which has upon the roll about 100 children, with an average daily attendance of about 80. In both places there are coal and clothing clubs, to which the farmers subscribe; and both have the advantage of resident landowners, which means, of course, various little comforts to the men and their families in illness. A farm carpenter was secretary to the Dullingham Union, and received 18s. a-week before the lock-out, besides payment for odd jobs. In the list of perquisites, beer figures largely. Many farmers in the district give to each labourer about three bushels of malt and a couple of pounds of hops, which the labourer takes to the farmer's brewhouse and makes into as many gallons of beer as he pleases, for consumption during harvest. Generally the man will brew beer of two kinds, and all will be drunk by the time the corn is reaped, sometimes before. The men drink away far too large a proportion of their wages, and much more also than is good for them. This is a kind of *largesse* which the farmer does great harm by giving, and there ought now to be an end of it.

Each locked-out adult labourer belonging to the National Union received 9s. weekly during the lock-out, and each boy 1s. per week less than he received when in work. I was present at Cheveley, a small village about four miles from Newmarket, when the men were paid this allow-

ance. The process was simple enough. Each village has a local secretary, who prepared a list of the men and boys locked out. When the delegates reached the place of meeting—a public-house—the first business was to receive the weekly contributions of members. Then the list prepared by the local secretaries, of persons entitled to help, was checked, and the total noted. The total sum handed over to the local secretaries for ten villages was over £205. About a hundred men remained down-stairs or outside the house while the money was being paid; but the bulk of the labourers would receive their shares from the local secretaries in the villages in which they resided. Among them there was no sign of depression. They were clear as to the justice of their cause, and confident of the result. The farmers, they thought, could not hold out very long. At all events, the Union could hold out too; and they were greatly cheered and encouraged by the sight of the new crisp bank-notes and the gold which the delegates had brought with them. Such aid was the best possible evidence of outside support and sympathy.

There are few prettier or healthier villages than Cheveley. The Duke of Rutland, who is the principal land-owner, and has a shooting-box close by, has built some new cottages which stand in pairs, each having three bedrooms and two rooms on the ground-floors. These cottages cost £300 the pair, and are infinitely roomier and healthier habitations than most workmen in towns possess—even men with twice the wages of the labourers here. I do not mean that the majority of the Cheveley labourers are thus housed. I heard of a few cottages with floors below the garden level, and small damp rooms, suggestive of fever and rheumatism; but the majority of the

cottages in the village have neat and pretty exteriors, and no complaint is made of them. A bit of garden is attached to each, and each also has its allotment of a rood at least, or sometimes two roods, of land outside the village. The allotments are held direct from the Duke of Rutland; and the labourer pays for them (including tithe and rates) 10s. a rood, or at the rate of £2 per acre. As the soil is good, this cannot be considered a high rental. Upon the garden patch and his allotment together the Cheveley labourer is generally able to raise more vegetables than suffice for his consumption. The surplus he takes or sends on market-days to Newmarket, where he obtains good prices. A school of the second grade for the sons of farmers and tradesmen, and an elementary school for the labourer's sons, are supported by an endowment of about £100 yearly, supplemented of course by school fees and school pence. There is also a girls' school, supported by subscriptions; the building cost £400. This school is under Government inspection, and takes its share of the annual education vote. Then there are the usual coal and clothing clubs, supported by the landowners and farmers, while some of the women find employment at the laundry of the great house when it is occupied; and from time to time much is given in charity. Add to this the produce of gleaning at harvest-time by the women and children, and there will be found outside the mere wages account a good deal to set to the credit side of the labourer. At present these advantages are so much a matter of course that he hardly remembers or appreciates them; but if they were withdrawn, they would make a considerable reduction from his comfort and that of his family.

There, as elsewhere, I found that the nominal rate of 13s. weekly was a *minimum* wage. The principal employer in Cheveley was Mr Martin Slater, Chairman of the New-market Defence Association, who farmed about 800 acres under the Duke of Rutland. During the year 1873 the labour on his 791 acres cost £1763, or an average of 44s. 7d. per acre. This sum includes, besides manual labour, the hire of thrashing and reaping machines, or an allowance for the wear and tear of such machines as belong to the farm. Mr Slater showed from his wages-book that, including harvest and piece work, he had not a man in his employ at the time of the lock-out who earned as little, not as 13s., but as 17s. weekly. Here are the wages earned by eight men locked out: A horse-keeper, 20s. 5d. weekly; a labourer, 18s. 9d.; a labourer, 17s. 8d.; a horse-keeper, 18s. 6d.; a labourer, 17s. 2d.; a yardman, 21s. 4d.; a shepherd, 22s.; a horse-keeper, 19s. 7d. This estimate includes harvest-work and piece-work; it includes also the difference between the cottage rental paid by Mr Slater to his landlord and that paid to him by the labourer, who is allowed to occupy a cottage under cost-price. The estimate does not include rates paid for these cottages. It comprises the cost-price of the malt and hops which are given to the men by the farmers hereabouts to be brewed for consumption at harvest-time. It does not include the present of beef at Christmas, or the drink given at all times at Cheveley. Here, again, one tired of hearing of the frequent doles of beer upon the smallest pretext. Each man receives four pints a-day when he is with the thrashing-machine; one pint a-day when he is drilling; a pint when he has to do with the muck-cart; and so on. These potations have increased, are increasing, and ought by all

means to be diminished. To be sure, the beer is home-brewed table-beer of a mild sort; but the rustic thirst for it seems to grow in drinking, and I fear that the repeated drains at the farmhouse encourage "soaking" and "boosing" on probably much less harmless liquor at the public-house. It would be infinitely better from every point of view that the farmers should put an end to this system of continual doles of beer, and add whatever sum they represent to the weekly wages of their men.

A word now with regard to overtime. It has been said that if the men earn high wages during harvest, it is because they work far longer than usual. I am told that, while the ordinary hours of work at other times are from 6 to 6, the men do not begin work at harvest-time much before 6 in the morning, though 5 is the nominal hour for buckling to, and they seldom continue working after half-past 7 or 8. If this statement be accurate, overtime in harvest is not excessive, though the work is doubtless exhausting.*

It was a sad sight to watch the men lounging listlessly

* A farmer in East Suffolk sends the following notes upon hours of labour: "Winter, from 7 till 5, with an hour for dinner. Summer, 6 to 6, with $\frac{1}{2}$ hour for breakfast and 1 hour for dinner. Harvest hours, 5 till 7, with $\frac{1}{2}$ hour for breakfast; 1 hour for dinner, 12 to 1; $\frac{1}{2}$ hour for 'beever' at 4. The men hardly ever work after 7. We think if a man works fairly from 5 till 7 he has done as much as can be expected of him. Harvest hours are from 5 till 7 (12 hours actual work); summer, ordinary hours, 6 till 6 (10 hours actual work); winter hours, 7 or 7.30 till 4.30 or 5 (8 hours, and often not more than 7 hours actual work). We lose time sadly in winter; and farmers who pay, as I do, wet and dry, get very poor value for their money. Several days last week (December) my men did not do two hours' work a-day, and were paid all the same. In a factory, men are not paid when not at work."

about the villages, or playing like overgrown school-boys. Marbles was the favourite game—the only game, indeed, I saw them play at. There seemed to be hardly life or energy enough left in the men to take to more active, manly sports. Dull monotony is too much in keeping with their other surroundings. The tap-room is a cheap resort, and beer at three-halfpence a pint is not an extravagant beverage. At such a time, however, the home and the family needed every penny and every halfpenny for bare necessities, and there was far less drinking than usual. The women were, perhaps, most to be pitied, and fared the worst, as women generally do in hard times. The timid among them exaggerated the evils of the struggle; the bold and sanguine, who were largely in the majority, exaggerated the benefits that would flow from it. Herein, I suppose, neither class differs much from their sisters who are higher in the social scale. By far the keenest, most uncompromising Unionists were to be found among the women. I feel sure that the husbands and brothers of some I heard talking dared not “desert the good cause;” or, if they did, life would have become to them a bitterness and a burden.

More than common interest centred at Exning, where the strike began which provoked the lock-out. In this village Union labourers were kept on by one employer, who gave the extra shilling demanded, and let his men have land rent free, manuring it for them into the bargain. Such a boon is highly valued, and the labourers speak of it with gratitude. The vegetables or corn-patches grown by them are probably equal to not much less than another shilling added to the weekly wage. At harvest-time the Exning labourers seemed to earn quite as much as their neighbours. One farmer set down the earnings of the

able-bodied men in his employ during the five harvest weeks at £11, 10s.; this sum included 30s., the cost-price of three bushels of malt and the hops given to each man to brew. So far, I have looked at the bright side of the shield, such as it is. I am sorry to add a very different story, which marks out Exning as the reverse of a model village. In the first place, there are no allotments besides the small portions of land which one or two farmers set apart for their men. The bulk of the Exning labourers are therefore landless, either as renters or otherwise, and thereby, I think, lose the benefit not only of such garden or other produce as they might raise, but of a distinctly good and elevating influence. The cultivation of a bit of land, which a labouring man for the time may call his own, keeps him out of mischief, gives him occupation in a leisure hour, and leads him to take interest and pride in his husbandry, so that it may not suffer by contrast with his neighbour's. I found some farmers jealous of the allotments, or fearful lest they should divert the labourer from farm work.* But in villages where they exist, as at Cheveley, and where a fair rental is paid for them, I have not heard that the farmers suffer; and at Cheveley the labourers have a rood up to two roods, or, in one case, even an acre. At Burwell the men pay for their fractional parts of an acre at

* "There is much reason, I submit," writes a correspondent, "in what the farmers have to say about large allotments. I have had men who, when working at day's wages, work as slowly as possible, and husband their strength, doing more in two hours on their allotment afterwards than they have done for me during the whole day. I have brought this dishonesty home to them many a time, and tried to shame them, to no purpose. Twenty rods of land for garden or allotment is as much as a labourer working for an employer can cultivate to advantage. I have looked thoroughly into this question from both sides, and am convinced of what I now write."

the rate of £4, £5, and even £6 an acre. Nothing like this rental is paid by the farmer; but the men jump at the chance of a bit of land even at these almost prohibitory rates.

To return, however, to Exning. In this parish there is no compensation for the absence of allotments in the extra size of the cottage-gardens. Many cottages, indeed, have no gardens at all; and in this and other respects might almost as well be up some alley in a crowded town. A still greater grievance is the want of a school. It is hardly credible, and certainly is not creditable, that a village of some 800 or 900 people should have remained two years without a school, as Exning has. It is exactly this period since the school which formerly existed ceased to be carried on, and the schoolmaster, somewhat too literally, "went abroad." A school board has since been formed; but still the work halts through some miserable squabble about a site for the new school. I believe the compulsory clauses of the Elementary Education Act will be applied for the acquisition of a site; and the Committee of Council will, I hope, use every effort to hasten a work which has been too long neglected. The more intelligent labourers, feeling bitterly the want of education themselves, lament still more bitterly that they cannot secure it for their children. At present the children are huddled together in dames' schools, where they are sent less in the hope that they will learn anything than in order to get them out of the way. A few are sent to Burwell, where there are excellent schools, or to Newmarket. The fact that they are so sent shows how strong is the wish of even poor parents that their children should enjoy advantages denied to themselves; but how can you expect from poor ill-shod boys

and girls regular attendance in all weathers at schools the nearest of which is close on two miles distant? The more provident men subscribe to benefit clubs, from which they obtain a small weekly allowance during sickness. But there is no coal or clothing club, assisted by subscriptions from the farmers and others, such as I have noted in other villages.*

The crying evil of Exning, however, when I visited it, was the cottage accommodation. I do not speak on this point from mere outside views, but went into some of the best, and some which, I heartily hope, are the worst of the labourers' dwellings. To the former class belonged a row of sixteen or twenty decent, respectable cottages, built by the squire, with two bedrooms overhead, a comfortable sitting-room down-stairs, a nice bit of garden, and common offices in the rear, including ovens for bread-making. The rent was £4, 16s. Notices to quit had been served upon Unionists here, and if any cottages should be vacated in consequence—I heartily hope they will not be—my informant said they would be eagerly snapped up by the villagers; indeed, there were numerous applicants already. No wonder, for these are aristocratic mansions compared with some of the cottages in other parts of the village. I entered seven or eight of them. All had but one bedroom; all were occupied by labouring men with families. I am glad to say that all the children were young; but this description would not apply, I believe, to the tenants of other cottages of a like class. The ground-

* "Coal and clothing clubs," writes one correspondent, "have quite lost their popularity here for some years. One or two poor parsons who had worked hard in promoting them have endured much mortification on this score. 'They worn't a-goin' to be bowt by none o' yar clothin' clubs.'"

floor, without exception, was of brick. I think it is an over-estimate to say that the sitting-room was 9 feet square. All the ceilings were low; I could not stand upright in one of the cottages. Then you went up-stairs into a sleeping-room, with shelving, barn-like roof, lighted dimly by one small window; and in this one room, or rather loft, were thickly crowded miserable truckle-beds, in which father and mother, and in one case four small children, must lie and sleep. Another window, or any aperture for ventilation, would make the place more endurable. I found the suggestion had been made by the occupier, but was disregarded by the landlord. The rotten boards of one cottage swarmed with vermin—"Enough to run away with the children," the mother said. "And a good job too, perhaps!" cried a woman, half in joke, half in earnest, as she talked of the enforced idleness of the bread-winner and the hardness of the times. Up-stairs and down-stairs, all was squalid and depressing. In one loft into which I put my head the children had been put to bed, and already the air felt close and heavy. What must it be with five or six people breathing the same confined atmosphere in the hot nights of summer? It was wonderful how, in such dwellings, the women could look so clean and neat. Habitations like these are enough to crush nearly all sense of decency, or notion of tidiness and comfort among the women, while they must inevitably drive the husband to the public-house. The wonder is that the women are so tidy and that the men are not worse. In one cottage both living-room and bedroom were on the ground-floor, and man and wife and three young children had to sleep in the poor beds placed upon the brick floor of the wretchedly small damp bedroom. This family were to sail for

Queensland in a few days, and their neighbours were making a small collection for them. The wife—apparently a tidy, respectable, well-conducted woman—was bitter against the land she was leaving. “At all events, you will get a better house where you are going to.” “It will be a poor place if we don’t,” she replied; and it was impossible not to agree with her heartily. I asked whether many cottages in Exning had only one sleeping-room? My informant said, “Not less than half.” Hovels like these must at times be nests of fever; and one cannot help asking why such small unhealthy dens should be allowed to stand for year after year in these villages? The sanitary machinery in rural districts must be sadly defective.

It will be gathered from this description of Exning that, though in the matter of wages the men were no worse off and some were better off than their neighbours, other causes combined there to make them discontented, and to explain the reason why this village was the first to proclaim what must be called an industrial war. Talk with the men here and elsewhere leads me to attach much importance to the possession by them of small allotments at a moderate rental. The landless labourer is always discontented, and envies his comrade the opportunity of growing a few sacks of potatoes for home consumption, or broccoli and other vegetables for sale. The bit of land is a savings-bank on a small scale, into which the small cultivator puts his labour at odd times, taking out that which represents hard cash. The pig is another small savings-bank, the investments in which are withdrawn when killing-time comes. Thrift and industry are encouraged by both forms of investment; but pigs cannot be kept by the occupiers of such cottages as those just described,

and allotments are the exception in Exning. I regret to say, also, that this is not the only village hereabouts in which there is no school. Now, desirable as it may be that labourers should have land, it is far more important that their children should have education. There is a want of brightness and intelligence about many of the men one talks to which is painfully suggestive. The children in the schools are far less quick in learning, and offer, in point of intelligence, far less promising material than town children. It is all the more essential, therefore, that there should be no break of continuity in the work of education. Yet, here and there, you come upon a village where the children are left to run wild, and to grow up as stolid and ill-informed as their fathers. The contrast between parishes is sometimes striking. Exning has no school: Burwell, two miles distant, has two well-built, excellent schools for boys and girls; and the clergyman, the Rev. J. W. Cockshott, carries on a night-school for adults, with occasional penny readings and other methods of enlisting the interest and sympathies of the labourers.

Temperance societies seem to have made little way in the Cambridgeshire and Suffolk villages around Newmarket, though they are needed quite as much as in the towns. I heard of some Good Templars in Burwell; and one must be thankful to any agency which keeps poor men from making themselves poorer and their homes more wretched and degraded by drink. On all hands I hear unqualified satisfaction expressed at the earlier closing enforced by the Licensing Act. It has been in these villages an unmixed boon; the police have had less to do; and the men go home more frequently sober, or perhaps I ought

to say less frequently drunk. But it is to education that one chiefly looks for the means of lifting up the labourers, by giving them, among other things, wider and clearer views of what they may do for themselves, and by teaching them to adapt themselves more readily to new and better conditions. The process of improvement may be slower than is supposed, for the rust which has gathered through long years of neglect is not to be rubbed off in a single generation. Meanwhile, one must come into some of these remote villages to understand and appreciate the good which may be done, and is being done, by many a hardworking and self-denying clergyman in the midst of the prevailing poverty, prejudice, and ignorance. What his predecessors may have done or failed to do in the past it is unnecessary to inquire; but one is grateful to hear the testimony borne by rich and poor to the good work now done by many of his class. The education given in these villages is principally due to him, and his strength and often scanty resources are both taxed to the utmost to raise the mental and moral *status* of his flock under conditions singularly trying and depressing. His work would be much easier, and the prospects of improvement both in the mind and morals of the poor about him would be much greater, if they had better wages, fewer temptations to drink, and more decent and comfortable dwellings.

This consideration leads me to a subject I have mentioned frequently to farmers as well as men—I mean “piece-work,” or, as they call it in this neighbourhood, “putting work out.” Employers and workers alike admit that this system is applicable to much, if not to most, of the work about the farm; and surely it furnishes one mode of raising the labourer’s wages without increasing the farmer’s

expenses. First, as to the labourer. "Look here," said a sturdy fellow, when I was telling him that there were complaints among the farmers of slow, unconscientious work—"look here; what encouragement have I to do my very best all day long, when some chaps alongside of me don't do much above half what I do, and yet earn just as much wages? It gives a man a bad heart, I can tell you."* One could not but assent to such reasoning; and it is obvious that in agriculture, where it is perhaps easier to see what each man does than in a workshop or manufactory, this system of handicapping the quickest or most conscientious workers in favour of the slow and unconscientious favours skulking all round. In principle, there can be no denying that on a farm, as in every other business, each labourer should have a distinct inducement to do his best, and that he who does most should earn most. Now, to what extent is it possible for farmers to get their work done by piece? An intelligent farmer in a neighbouring village told me he put out the following work: Ploughing, spreading manure, and drilling, at so much per acre; dressing corn with the machine, paid by quantity; turnip-hoeing, both by hand and by horse; and cutting and cleaning turnips for sheep, at so much per acre. He had tried to pay for threshing by the job, but had not suc-

* "There is something in what the labourer says," writes a farmer; "and if the Union thrives, his system will be adopted. But this will be a serious matter for all but those who are physically robust. It often happens that weakly men have large families; and if they are to go to the wall, I don't see that the position of the agricultural labourers *as a whole* will be improved. If workmen were conscientious I should prefer day-work—piece-work leads to 'scamping'; of course there are some things to which it is well adapted, but I cannot agree with your informant that *less* surveillance would be required."

ceeded to his satisfaction. However, the work already mentioned represents a considerable proportion of that to be done during the year. I omit the five weeks of harvest work, because that is almost universally done by piece already. In the words of my informant, no body of men can be more contented than his seem to be with the piece-work as thus arranged by him. They draw their weekly wages of 13s., and at the end of each quarter there is a settlement, when they are paid the surplus due to them. Thus they always have money accumulating, and it comes to them in a lump, so that it cannot be muddled away week by week; and when it comes, it stops many a gap in the family expenditure. In this way they make two or three shillings a-week more than their stated wages. As to the farmer, he had equal, perhaps greater, cause for satisfaction. The result to him was that, upon 630 acres, instead of requiring nine single ploughs with 18 horses, he gradually dropped down to two double ploughs with six horses, and a single plough for occasional use. He found that whereas a man's average day's work in drilling used to be about 9 acres, it rose to 13 acres; and on one occasion a man, to show what he could do, got through 16 acres. My informant gave me some other instances of rapid work; but these, perhaps, suffice. The material point is his estimate that, by introducing piece-work upon his farm wherever he could do so, he saved 10s. an acre in labour, while his men were more satisfied and better paid. His foreman, from no interested motive, but from sheer pigheadedness, raised every obstacle to the new system; but some time after its success had been made clear, he came to the farmer and said, "I think, sir, I might as well leave you." "All right, John," was the reply; "but why?"

"Because, sir, I have so little to do now; nearly all my time used to be employed in looking after men and seeing that they did their work, but now they go straight ahead and want no looking after." It is right I should moderate any too sanguine expectations which may be formed from the results of the piece system in this instance by stating that it did not prevent the men on the farm from striking for an advance of wages at the very outset of the struggle. They could not be employed at piece-work all the year round, so they were hands on weekly wages, like their fellows, during some part of the year, and they cast in their lot with the rest.

The meetings of neither farmers nor labourers tended to peace, for it was hard to restrain indiscreet and hot-headed men on both sides from using, under excitement, irritating language, which inflamed the wound instead of healing it. One difficulty in the way of arbitration was, that both sides were contending for a principle. The labourers maintained their right to combine—which includes, of course, the right to act under competent or incompetent, reasonable or unreasonable, leaders, whether resident in the locality or sitting as a central executive a hundred miles off. The farmers could not put their case quite so concisely; but a child can see how much more convenient and comfortable it would be for them to deal with units instead of thousands, and to make their own terms with their own men apart from any outside pressure or dictation. I believe that the demand of 14s., instead of 13s., a-week made at Exning, would have been readily conceded by the majority of the masters if it had come straight from the Exning men, and not from delegates behind them. Thus the question of wages was not really the

issue between the combatants.* The farmers felt that, with Unionists in their employ, they were never safe, either as to wages, hours of labour, or terms of service. Moreover, the next order from Leamington might be that Unionists were not to work with non-Unionists, and were to desert at harvest-time, or otherwise, any farmer who employed non-Unionists. Manufacturers have had to face these difficulties and make the best of them. The situation, however, was entirely new and startling to farmers, who on all sides declared that they would rather throw up their holdings than employ members of the Union. Some notices to quit were actually given by tenants to landlords in Suffolk, from dire apprehension of the consequences of the agitation. There was another hindrance to hopes of arbitration in the fact that the farmers suffered little inconvenience from the want of labour, and were saving money by the strike. It is hard to convince men who profit by remaining unconvinced. Apart from this fact, however, there were scores of shrewd, intelligent agriculturists here who declared that the lock-out would do good both to employers and men, that it would put an end to perquisites, and teach the farmer to economise labour, pick his workmen, and pay them well; while it would drive away surplus labour from a district where labour is now in

* The chairman of the Newmarket Farmers' Association, at the first public meeting of that body on April 7, said: "This is not a struggle for a paltry rise of 1s. in wages. It is not a question of wages at all. The question is, Are these delegates to rule over us?" Mr Kent, a farmer of Chippenham, told the farmers at the same meeting that "one of the Unionist agitators" in his parish said, "We mean, when we have succeeded at Exning, to go to Chippenham, and afterwards we shall go through the district parish by parish. We shall have 15s. a-week, then 16s., then we shall advance to 20s.; and at harvest-time we shall have what we choose to ask."

excess, and put an end to loafing and loitering over work, compelling the labourer to give a fair day's work for a fair day's wage.

The effect of the lock-out was in some cases greatly to increase the strength of the Labourers' Union in the out-lying villages. A mere attempt to gain another shilling a week on the one side, and a refusal of it on the other, would have produced nothing like the sympathy and dogged feeling aroused among the labouring class not hitherto connected with the Union by a refusal to employ all Unionists. Such a policy was bitterly resented as a denial of "the right of us poor men to stand shoulder to shoulder and try and pluck up a bit:" this was one man's way of putting it to me. "Our masters," said another, "will let us spend our twopence in getting drunk, or in any other mischief, but we mustn't put it in the Union." Of course there is another point of view from which the lock-out may be regarded as legitimate defensive warfare by the farmers. The men, however, could not be made, or perhaps expected, to look at it from any point of view but their own.

On market-days, during the continuance of the lock-out, the Union delegates generally held outdoor meetings, to which the labourers came in hundreds from the neighbouring villages, often accompanied by their womankind. Sometimes they paraded the town with a band of music at their head, and a few blue banners. All the men wore bits of blue ribbon. The women were respectably dressed, and bore the same badge on their bonnets. At Newmarket they always gathered round a waggon placed upon a piece of waste land called "The Severals," where they listened to some stirring addresses. Mr J. C. Cox, a Derbyshire magistrate, presided at one such meeting, and said, among other

things, that the influence of the Union was well shown by the proposals made by employers to establish a benefit society for aged and worn-out labourers. Such proposals were never thought of before the Union was established.* But the Union (he continued) did not merely represent an odd shilling or two a-week in a labourer's income ; it represented the principle of independence. What the labourers wanted, was such a wage as would enable them to take care of themselves, and not be beholden to farmer, squire, or parson.

After the president's speech, the labourers were addressed by Mr Ball and other delegates. Mr Ball inculcated firmness, moderation, sobriety, and honesty. To show the present condition of agricultural labourers, of whom he had himself been one, he said he believed that 95 per cent of them were in debt, and that 80 per cent could not write their names.

Many hundreds of labourers are employed in the Fens of Cambridgeshire in coprolite-digging, and this comparatively new industry competes for labour with husbandry. In Burwell, a parish adjoining Exning, I visited some of these diggings upon land belonging to Mr Robert Stephenson. The coprolites are a mass of petrified dung

* One of the committee of the Suffolk County Society says : " Mr Cox forgets that Hants, Wilts, and other counties, have had large county societies for 20 or 30 years. The Essex Provident, again, and the West Suffolk Friendly, are large and prosperous societies. It is *not* true that ' such proposals were never thought of until the Union was established.' The Suffolk County Provident Society was in embryo some time before the strike or lock-out, and it was a great question with its original promoters whether under the circumstances it would not be wise to abandon the project for a time. However, as Archdeacon Groome said at Ipswich, ' Why should we hesitate to do a good action because our motives *may* be misconstrued ? ' "

of extinct reptiles, found in the green sandstone formation, often mingled with bones and fossils. The surface-soil where they are met with is black peat, which is about a foot deep. The coprolites lie here at a depth of six or eight feet, in layers about six inches thick, above the stiff blue clay, here called "gault." Fen-land, the fee of which used to be worth less than £10 an acre, now lets, for the mere privilege of winning the coprolites, at from £70 to £200 an acre. When it is dug into, the peat-topping is put carefully aside, and after the coprolites are extracted, the ground is levelled and the peat mixed with the new surface-soil. This made land—the local name for which is "slurry land"—is then worth £10 more an acre as arable land than it was before. The coprolites are carefully washed to free them from the clay, and come out then like bits of blackish stone, generally rounded, from the size of a cherry-stone to a pigeon's egg, sometimes bigger. They are valuable as manure; and in a factory close by, belonging to Mr Ball, son of the late member for Cambridgeshire, I saw the process of conversion. They are ground in mills into a very fine powder; but this is valueless for manure until it has been mixed with sulphuric acid, when the product becomes a soluble superphosphate. The coprolite-diggers earn 17s. or 18s. a-week, and at harvest-time desert the diggings for the farm. They are, in fact, agricultural labourers; but the work is much harder than that of the ordinary farm hand, though the hours are shorter and there is a Saturday half-holiday. The result is, that the number of recruits is small, and farm hands who have tried the work often go back to their old occupation at 13s. a-week. Another local industry is pursued by the Fen men, who dig peat for fuel or cut sedge for thatching, and sometimes earn

in this way an average of 20s. a-week. The farmers say that the existence of these two industries in the district side by side with that of agriculture, proves that the rate of wages paid to farm labourers must be a fair market rate, otherwise the farm hands would seek these two employments more generally than they do. The Fen-land in Burwell, where the coprolites are won, forms part of the Great Bedford Level. There is a navigable cut into the Cam, and the land is kept drained by pumping-engines, the cost of which is defrayed by a drainage rate.

Burwell is a parish of some 7000 acres, farmed chiefly by small occupiers, and corn is the chief growth. In Exning, on the contrary, the holdings are chiefly large ones, and there some 5000 sheep are fattened in average years, with beasts in proportion. The farmers urged, as one reason against any increase of wages, that the fattening of stock had lately been anything but a profitable operation. Beasts bought in November 1873, and fattened on cake and roots since then, had been sold at a loss of some pounds per head, reckoning the cost of their keep. I was shown three accounts rendered by London salesmen of ewe-mutton sold by them at the Metropolitan Meat Market for a farmer in this district. Ewe-mutton is not of the best quality, though I am assured that this mutton was excellent eating; yet the highest price realised for it was 4s. 8d. a stone—7d. a pound, and by far the greater part fetched only 6½d. From this price there is a farther deduction for salesmen's expenses. If there is such a thing as an "equitable wage" for a farm labourer, the farmer may perhaps ask whether he is not entitled to an equitable price for his mutton. But equities of value, I fear, exist for the benefit neither of Cambridgeshire farmers nor of London consumers. It may be of interest to

add, that at Newmarket, Bury St Edmunds, and most other market-towns in the district, the pigs and sheep are sold by auction, an auctioneer going from pen to pen on market-days, followed by the butchers and other buyers, and disposing of every lot without reserve. The system has not long been adopted in this district, but it is extending ; and the farmers think, on the whole, it gives them better guarantees of a fair market price for their live-stock than they had under the old custom of sale to casual buyers, each ignorant of the price offered by the other.

In Burwell the Crown is the chief landowner, and it sets an admirable example in the matter of cottage-building. I visited some of the cottages on the Crown estate. All have three bedrooms, with a sitting-room and outhouses ; all are substantial, comfortable dwellings. The peasantry in decent cottages seem to be brighter and more cheerful, and have a look of greater self-respect, than the unfortunates who live in the hovels which, I regret to say, are also to be found in this village. Many cottages have but one bedroom. I visited one such cottage in which father, mother, and six children were compelled to herd together—one a grown-up daughter. To be sure, the loft which formed the one bedroom was twice as long as the usual run of such places. The man said he had asked his landlord to put up a partition and make another window, but in vain. In another cottage the woman said they had put the children up-stairs, and she and her husband had slept in a bed on the brick floor until the bottom board of the bed had fallen to pieces from damp, and then they had to go among the children again. The sanitary inspector visits these dwellings occasionally to prevent overcrowding, but the difficulty is for the poor to find other cottages, even when they are inclined

to pay more rent. Some of the worst of these cottages belong to small occupiers ; some are mortgaged up to the hilt ; often the owners can afford neither to rebuild nor repair. It is a hard thing, again, for the sanitary inspector to pronounce a cottage unfit for human habitation when no better—perhaps literally no other—can be had for the family. Allotments at Burwell are the exception. The chief lessee under the Crown, Mr Stephenson, lets his cottagers a rood or more of land at the price he pays for it, and then the peasant can keep his pig : that useful creature helps to manure the land and pay the rent ; and the world seems to go on more brightly. At Burwell, at Wood-Ditton, and other villages, some allotments are let to the labourers at a rental much higher than that paid by the farmer. Here is another claim for equity—equitable rental. I am glad to say it is a claim which, on whatever principle it rests, is recognised by some farmers, who seek to make no profit out of the labourers in this way. But the poor men crave so for a bit of land that they are willing to pay, and do pay, £6 an acre for land which costs the farmer little more than £2. Inexorable political economy says that price shall be ruled by supply and demand, and that the value of a thing is what it will bring in the market. Still, one does not like to hear of such applications of the inexorable law. In several of these parishes there are charity lands, which might be appropriated for allotments with great fitness ; but I have often found that such bequests have led to quarrels of the petty village type, and the devise to trustees for charitable purposes has proved a curse instead of a blessing to the little community.

Another question forced upon one in these villages con-

cerns benefit clubs. A Cambridgeshire farmer called one of his men from the field, and this conversation followed in my hearing: "How old are you, John?" "Sixty-one next birthday, master." "How many children have you had?" "Twelve—nine living." "You have always kept them without help from the parish?" "Yes, thank God; I never had a penny from the parish in my life." The man, as I afterwards found, had received a small money prize from the village agricultural society for bringing up a large family without parochial relief, and he was now earning the usual 13s. a-week. "How long did you subscribe to that benefit club of yours, John?" "Nigh upon five-and-thirty years." "It's gone now, has it not?" "Ah, yes! That was a bitter bad job, surely!" This poor man—happily still hale and strong—had paid into the club 1s. 6d. a-month out of his hard earnings—by what extraordinary thrift and self-denial one may easily imagine, with his large family—and now all was lost. But for the sentiment of the thing, he might as well have been idle and improvident; and if the children for whom he had worked so hard could not support him, his only prospect in old age was the workhouse. The club had "broke up," and he tried to tell us how and why. The story need not be repeated; but that, said my companion, is the history of three-fourths of the benefit clubs about here.*

* "I myself," writes a correspondent, "have heard just such a tale scores of times, and this is exactly what has led to the establishment of the Suffolk Benefit Society."

CHAPTER II.

DETERMINATION OF FARMERS—THE OLD LABOURERS—RESULTS OF
 LOCK-OUT—WEST SUFFOLK FARMERS' DEFENCE ASSOCIATION—THE
 LINCOLNSHIRE RULES—WEST-THORPE—MASTER AND MEN; A CON-
 FERENCE—VILLAGES AROUND BURY ST EDMUNDS—FARMING AS AN
 OCCUPATION—RETURN OF MIGRATING LABOURERS—AREA OF LOCK-
 OUT LIMITED—ACTUAL EARNINGS—OFTEN NOT KNOWN BY MEN
 THEMSELVES.

As the lock-out continued, the confidence of the farmers increased. "My work was never more advanced at this season" was a common expression. "I am saving money by the strike, and expect to save more. As to allowing the Union delegates to interfere between me and my men, and re-employing those who remain under such influence, I would rather give up my farm—I would rather die first." Strong opinions like these were not uncommon, even among shrewd practical men, especially when, as in this case, the employer was conscious of having treated his men extremely well, enabling them to earn two or three shillings a-week more than the average wages of the district by means of piece-work, whenever that system could be resorted to upon the farm. It was natural that farmers like him, who paid their men liberally, regard being had to the market rate of labour around them, should feel especially aggrieved when deserted by their men "under foreign

dictation." Such farmers, however, forget that the main object of trade-unions is to protect the working men against employers who do not show the same consideration. Until the recent struggle there were no Unions among the farmers in Cambridgeshire or Suffolk; but a tacit understanding prevailed there, as probably in most parts of the kingdom, that no farmer should give higher wages than those which ruled in the district. If he did so, he would be called unneighbourly. If he cares to live on good terms with the farmers about him he must deal with the labour question pretty much as they do, and not make the labourers on other farms dissatisfied by any exceptional liberality to his own hands. I found several farmers admit that they should like to raise the wages of their men if it were not for this indirect social pressure.

It was doubtless quite as uncomfortable for a labourer as for an occupier to run counter to the opinion of his class during the struggle. Though the arts of "picketing" and intimidation had not then travelled into the rural districts from the towns, labourers who did not join the Union and remained at work throughout the lock-out district had a bad time of it. As one of them put it to his master, with, perhaps, an extreme vivacity of metaphor, "We might as well have a live cat in our belly as live with Union men and not join the Union." The misfortune was, that there was no distinction of persons in the exercise of this kind of pressure. I was told of a man, seventy-five years old, kept in constant employment by his master at 12s. a-week, mainly out of charity. This man, yielding to persuasion, joined the Union, and was locked out, refusing to avail himself of the *locus pœnitentiæ* offered to him. "What do you mean to do when this business is over?" said the

master ; and the old man meekly answered that he thought he might "emigrate and do a little gardening in America." It was painful to hear of cases like these, and of the rupture of intimate relations between employer and employed, hitherto maintained without a break between sire and son on both sides, and often going back still further. "That old fellow," said a farmer, pointing to a grey-haired man who was standing disconsolately in a group of locked-out labourers, "helped to carry my father and mother to the grave. We have supported him and his in illness, and employed him winter and summer, when we had to go out of our way to invent something for him to do ; yet this is our reward !" Here, again, there was no strike — the labourers had simply been locked out ; and the complaint was, that the old man had refused to give up the ticket of membership, preferring to give up his old employer, and to court what seemed certain ruin rather than desert his fellow-workers. Such a preference seemed monstrous to the farmer, and the hardness and apparent ingratitude excited in him a bitter resentment, not against the labourer, but against the delegates who had led the labourer astray. You could go into no parish in the lock-out district without finding plenty of similar instances. It was of little use to urge that, in dictating to such men that they must not combine for mutual support, and in locking them out because they would combine, the farmers were the first to strain the old relations. To the average employer it seemed altogether against nature that his old hands should thus acknowledge any other duty than the duty they owed to an old master who had been kind and considerate to them, who had paid them the fair market wage, and never started them off the farm when work was slack. It was

not pleasant to witness this shock on all sides to the old kindly, paternal relations.

The Newmarket Farmers' Association extends into 42 parishes, some of them very large ones. The parish of Mildenhall, for instance, covers 17,000 acres; Soham, 12,700 acres. Reaping-machines are in general use here, and, so far, labour is economised. Then it was proclaimed that after harvest such crops would be chosen as would further dispense with labour. Heavy root-crops are now grown in many parts of the district, and sheep and beasts are fattened upon these roots for the London market. A good deal of labour is required in "clamping" up the roots, and in cleaning and cutting them for the stock. But instead of mangel and swedes, which require plenty of manure, the farmers said they would grow white turnips, which would need less manure, and they would keep on their ewes and feed them off the ground. "Consumers will feel the pinch quite as much as we shall," said a farmer; "perhaps more. We shall send less fat mutton to market—a good deal less. The manure-merchants will feel the pinch too. If the men do not give way I shall spend £50 upon manure during the year, instead of probably £300. The seed-merchants will cry out too, you may depend upon it. Our cultivation will not be as 'high' as it used to be; but I am not at all sure that it will not be more profitable." Barley, a favourite crop here, fetches a good price. Just prior to the lock-out an agent from one of the Burton breweries had been spending £3000 a-week in the district in buying barley. "I have known barley sell at 16s.," said a farmer; "now it fetches 54s." "Never," he added, with a beautiful enthusiasm which made him forget for the moment the

stubborn ingratitude of labour—"never did I think to see the day when I should sell wheat at 6os. again!" It was he who had declared to me that he would rather give up his holding than employ Unionist hands. Probably he may have used the same language when protection was taken away from the British farmer. But I could not help hoping and believing that the labour problem would get itself solved, even without suppressing agricultural trade-unions, and that my excellent friends would nevertheless still go on farming, and would still prosper.

For some weeks the farmers around Bury St Edmunds took no part in the agitation which had begun around Newmarket. On the 22d of April, however, a meeting of farmers was held at Bury to consider the situation. Lieutenant-Colonel Wilson, a landed proprietor in the neighbourhood, acted as chairman. The Marquess of Bristol, who has a residence and estates near Bury, took part in the proceedings. Mr Henry Stanley, estate-agent, of Bury, who farms lands in the district, acted as hon. secretary. Colonel Wilson, in a moderate and conciliatory speech, admitted that farmers had no right to lock-out labourers simply because they combined; but he thought that the rules of the Lincolnshire League, which he read,* showed an evident resolve to deal with the farmers in detail, district by district. A resolution was passed for the

* These rules were as follows :—

"The rate of wages for able-bodied men, members of this League, shall not be less than 18s. per week." "After the rate of wages for able-bodied men has been raised to 18s. a-week, and the hours of labour have been reduced to that to be decided on at the next annual delegate meeting, two weeks' notice shall be given to the employers before any further alteration in the rate of wages or hours of labour takes place; but until these two objects are obtained, one week shall be considered sufficient notice of an intended strike." "At no time,

formation of a "West Suffolk Farmers' Defence Association," "to resist, by the united action of employers, any unfair demands from the united action of the men." Another motion, calling upon employers to try to induce the men to leave the Union by reasoning with them, was rejected on the ground,—first, that conciliation had been tried already in most cases ; and secondly, that such a resolution was a first step towards treating with the Union, a course which was strongly repudiated. One speaker said :—

"In my opinion, any farmer who advises you to treat with the Union, or to recognise it in any way, is just as great an agitator as Joseph Arch. The question is whether the Union are to be our masters. This is a farmer's question ; it is not a landlord's question this year, but if you encourage the present agitation it will very soon become a landlord's question."

This view obtained much favour with the farmers, who evidently thought it pointed to a reduction of rent. The same speaker urged that all that was wanting to beat the Union was unity among the farmers. If all the farmers could be got to unite, they might defy Mr Arch and all his sympathisers. He did not believe the Union would receive outside support for any length of time, and the farmers, by holding together, would get back every man who had left them if they wanted him. The Marquess of Bristol read a letter he had received from a large employer of labour at Lynn, who said :—

except in the most urgent cases, should a greater number of men be allowed to cease work [strike] than can be supported by the contributions of their fellow-members. Employers especially noted for their constant or extensive employment of female and infant labour shall be reported to the branch committee, who shall take action as they think necessary."

"I have spoken to several large occupiers in this part of the country who are all much interested in the lock-out, and they all say it is the only way of counteracting the work of the Union. I am glad to say that in every instance in this district in which the men have struck by order of the Union, the farmers, by working themselves, by help received from neighbours, and by means of the few men who stuck to them, have had most of the men back on the masters' terms."

Ultimately, the following resolution was passed unanimously: "That, under the existing rules, this Association refuses to employ Union men." Another resolution was proposed and carried: "That on Friday the men employed by members of the Association receive a week's notice that, unless they ceased to belong to the Union, they shall be locked out."

Strictly construed, these resolutions did not preclude the West Suffolk farmers from employing members of the National Union, and only bound them to discharge labourers belonging to the Lincolnshire League.

It soon became clear, however, that the farmers both of West Suffolk and Cambridgeshire did not recognise nice distinctions between the rules of the two Unions, and held that if these Unions were treated as having an equal title to the public subscriptions, which for some time flowed in freely, both must be on the same footing and must have substantially the same objects. The result was that, at the time appointed, the farmers who joined the Bury Association gave notice to all their Unionist labourers indifferently, whether these belonged to the National or the Lincolnshire organisation.

Suggestions were made to the farmers at one of their

meetings that they should call their men together and talk over differences in a friendly way. I was anxious, if possible, to attend one of these interviews; and the opportunity was given to me by Mr Henry Stanley of Bury, the honorary secretary of the Defence Association, who farms close on 700 acres of land—his own property—at West-Thorpe, about 14 miles from Bury. The men had been previously prepared by letter for the interview. They did not know what my mission was, nor did I alarm them by taking notes. From memory, however, I can give the substance of what passed, pretty nearly in the words used on either side. Before doing so, it is necessary to explain that when Mr Stanley bought the land, four or five years ago, it was in very bad condition. He began by doubling the number of labourers, and introduced steam-cultivation. At his expense one of his farm hands was taught to drive the engine, and another attended to the thrashing-machine and the steam-plough, both these men receiving mechanics' wages. Just before last harvest the Union labourers asked £9, 5s. for the usual five weeks' work, having had in previous years only £8. They were offered £8, 15s., which was believed to be quite the *maximum* price paid in the neighbourhood; but they left the farm on the eve of harvest, and their employer had to get his harvest in as he could. However, they asked to be taken back afterwards, and were taken back. The labourers, sixteen in all, followed us into a large room in the bailiff's house, and stood or sat, as they felt inclined. One was a lad of about sixteen. Three of them must have been close on sixty years old. One was the parish clerk. At times several of them took part in the conversation, but one of the more intelli-

gent was the general spokesman. Throughout the interview they were perfectly good-humoured and civil. There was no defiance or bitterness or jeering on their side, but a manly self-respect which made itself felt ; and it will be seen that their replies showed no little shrewdness and appreciation of the points just then in issue. Their employer, of course, opened the conversation. He said :—

“ I have come here on an unpleasant business. We farmers feel that we cannot, after employing so much capital to obtain a crop, have that crop put in danger, as mine was last year, for the want of labour to gather it in. We must protect ourselves against such a danger, for it is quite clear we are never safe with such rules as you Union men are bound by.”

Men.—“ About those rules, master ! We are not under the Lincoln rules. We belong to the National Union, we do. There’s no such rules in our Union ! ”

Farmer.—“ I’m glad of that ; but still you are not free agents. A lot of delegates go about the country and set you against your employers, and then you have to strike when they tell you.”

Men.—“ No, master ; that isn’t it. It’s the men who says when they don’t think they are getting enough. They delegates don’t set us on.”

Farmer.—“ Anyhow, you know how I was left last harvest. That shows what your Unions will do. How can you expect us farmers to bear such things ? We get a fine crop on the ground, and our year’s profits depend on getting it in quickly and well, and just at that moment you leave us. That’s your Union.”

Men.—“ Well, master, but we’ve a right to better our-

selves, you know, and most on us made more last harvest than you offered us."

Farmer (singling out the spokesman).—"Now, what did you make?"

Man.—"I made £11, master."

Farmer.—"How did you make it?"

• *Man*.—"I took the harvest at 12s. an acre, and finished in a month and three days."

Farmer.—"Well, haven't I, year after year, asked you all to work on that system" (*i.e.*, taking the harvest by the acre instead of contracting for the whole job); "and haven't you, year after year, said you would rather go on upon the old system, though I showed you by figures you could earn more money under the new one?"

Men.—"Yes, that's true enough, master."

Farmer.—"And then you leave me and do with a stranger what you wouldn't do with me? Mind, I don't want to keep you from doing the best you can for yourselves, nor do I ask you to give up your Union tickets if you think you are better off in a Union. But are you better off? What good is the Union to you? I know you men read the newspapers."

Men.—"Yes, as well as we can."

Farmer.—"There is always a 'lawyer' among you to read the newspapers—(laughter)—to such as can't read for themselves. Now, I like you to read the papers; but don't you find from them that labour fetches just what it's worth, like my corn and sheep? When there's too much in the market, down goes the price; when it's scarce, up it goes. Wages rose among you before you heard of Unions, and so they would now without Unions if more labour was wanted than was in the market."

Men.—"We think the Union will keep up wages, master, and raise 'em too. Besides, it helps us to go north or leave the country, and so thins us out a bit. The rest of us must be better off."

Farmer.—"Well, you must judge for yourselves whether you like the Union better than you like my service. As you know, I've never been a hard master, and I don't think you want a Union to protect you against me."

Men.—"No; you've always treated us well, master; we've nothing to say against you. But then we mayn't always have you to deal with. We may want our Union to protect us then against somebody who is hard. There is not another trade without its Union. Why should farm labourers not be let to combine as well as other people?"

Farmer.—"For one thing, because farming can't be carried on like other trades. They don't depend on the seasons; we do, as you know very well. Have you got a rule in your Union which will insure me good weather for my harvest?"

Men (laughing).—"No, master, 'taint likely."

Farmer.—"You know as well as I do that for the last two years I have got nothing by this farm through the wet."

Men.—"No, master, we don't suppose you have."

Farmer.—"Then, look at this. You are just going to thrash two stacks of corn. You began to till the land for that corn at Michaelmas 1872; you got paid for your labour long since, but not a penny of return have I had yet. No; I must take that corn into the market next week, and to make it pay me I shall have to get at least 40s. a comb for it." [A comb is four bushels.] "But I shall have to take only 30s. for it. It is the same with my beasts and my sheep. I can't reckon beforehand, as a

builder might, what a job will cost, and what it will yield, for there are the wet and the drought to upset all my reckoning. Neither can I do as any tradesman would do—name his price, and refuse to work if he cannot make his price for the job. We farmers must go on, wet or dry, good time or bad time; and we must take the market price for our corn and stock, whatever that may be.”

Men.—“Yes, that’s true, master. But farmers have their good years as well as their bad years, and can set one against another. We only have our labour to sell, and must always try to get the best price it will fetch in the market.”

Farmer.—“Quite so; and I have always given you, and am ready to give you still, the full market price for your labour.”

Men.—“Yes; and you know, master, we have not asked for higher wages. That is not the reason you are parting with us. Why should we be turned off because some men struck for higher wages at Exning?”

Farmer.—“It is not a question of wages between us. It is the constant uncertainty and irritation in which your Unions keep the farmers. So long as you are in the Union, we don’t know where we are or with whom we have to deal. I say again, that so long as that lasts we do not look upon you as free agents to make a bargain with us.”

Men.—“That be wrong, master; it is, really. They delegates don’t order the men to strike; it’s the men themselves. Do we say a word against the farmers when they join together? No; and what we do say is, we shall be bondmen—yes, bondmen—if we are not let to combine.”

Farmer.—“Don’t give up your tickets, then, if you think the Union is for your good. You are quite free to

combine, and we farmers are free to employ only those who do not combine."

Men.—"To be sure. Then are we to leave you next Friday?"

Farmer.—"That is what we have agreed upon at Bury. I have always found you a good set of labourers, and I don't think you have found me a bad master."

Men.—"No, surely."

Farmer.—"We have always got on well together, except in that little matter last harvest. I am sorry to part with you; but so it must be. At any rate, we will part good friends." (To the bailiff.) "Bring in some beer and let them have some all round."

Men.—"Thank you, master."

Farmer.—"Perhaps we may meet again."

Men.—"Perhaps we may. We shan't be above asking you for a job again if we want it, just as we did after harvest."

Farmer.—"And you shall have it, if your places are not filled up.* Let me advise you to do anything rather than go out of the country. There is plenty of work here in England for all of you, and a good many men who have crossed the water wish themselves back again."

Men.—"Some do well, we hear. Some do badly at home or abroad."

And so this talk ended, as it began, with mutual good feeling. To me it was deeply interesting talk; and I have given it fully, omitting no points which told on either side, for I think, as far as it goes, it yields a better and fairer

* It is pleasant to add that nearly all these men did apply and were taken on again when the Union allowances ceased, though the engine-man's place was filled up, and he had to fall back into the ranks.

illustration of the case of employer and labourer, in the homely words of each, than could be supplied by the pen of any advocate. Of the men who were thus put out of work, the standing wages of the engineman were £1 a-week and £6 for the harvest. The chief spokesman had 3s. 6d. a-day when with the machinery. At other times he was frequently employed at piece-work; and being a capital workman, he did well on piece: his ordinary wages, when not thus employed, were 13s. a-week, and, as we have heard, he made £11 at harvest. The horsemen, who take charge of the horses and feed them, receive 15s. a-week, with what is called "journey money" when they take corn or other produce to mill, railway, or market, or when they cart cake, coals, or manure from the town. This "journey money" is 6d. for a short, and 1s. for a long journey. The remaining able-bodied men are paid 13s. a-week ordinary wages, and harvest money besides. All have as much piece-work as can be planned for them in draining, fencing, hoeing, and mowing, at so much an acre. No deduction is made for wet or broken days. The wage is paid independent of weather or of work; a job is found for the men or made for them throughout the year; and the farmer said his able-bodied ordinary labourers had averaged 16s. weekly during the winter, and 18s. during the summer. Nor is the work anything like as hard as it used to be. There are the steam-plough and scarifier. The artificial grasses and most of the meadow-grass are mown by horse-machine; the raking and gathering are done by horse-power. Then at harvest-time the reaping-machine has displaced the scythe; and the hardest work of all—pitching corn, hay, peas, or beans from the waggon up to the stack—is done by an "elevator." Horse-power

also at West-Thorpe cuts the chaff, breaks the cake, pulps the roots, and pumps the water from a well 80 ft. deep into troughs, which distribute it in the stockyard and throughout the farm-buildings. The engine that drives the steam-plough and scarifier thrashes the corn and grinds it. Old-fashioned farmers of a past generation would gape with wonder to see all these new-fangled ways. The implement-makers are not without hopes of perfecting a machine for tying up the corn in the wake of the reaper, which would, indeed, be a valuable ally to the farmer. Meanwhile, on all the large farms around Bury St Edmunds—and the holdings do not average less than 500 or 600 acres—labour has been greatly economised; and some of the hardest, roughest work—which, as our neighbours say, tends to “brutalise” the workmen—has now, in agriculture as in manufactures, been remitted to machinery. The men at West-Thorpe did not quarrel with their lot, and reminded their employer that they were not complaining of wages. There were other men on the farm who had not joined the Union—perhaps because they felt too well satisfied to run any risk, perhaps because of their comfortable surroundings. Two cottages had been built for them, each containing a sitting-room 12 ft. by 12 ft., a back room of the same size, less the space occupied by the staircase and store-closet, and two bedrooms overhead. In the rear was a common bakehouse and oven, with a copper and a wood-house for each. The cottages were brick-built and pan-tiled, and had cost £170 the pair. But they were built four years ago, and since then the increasing price of materials has greatly increased the cottage difficulty. The same cottages, built upon exactly the same plan, would now cost £170 with-

out the bricks and tiles, which would come to £70 more, while the farmer would also have to cart these materials. The remains of the old manor-house at West-Thorpe were fitted up for three or four other labourers on the farm, and with one exception they also had not joined the Union. In all these cases the rental paid is much below the value of the cottage. The possession of a comfortable house and a nice bit of garden must at all times be a powerful inducement to a labouring man to stay with a good master.

The labourers around Bury St Edmunds were for the most part as stanch as the farmers. At one of the farmers' meetings a gentleman described an interview between Mr Tyrrell of Haughley and his labourers. It ended by a declaration from them that they would die before they would give up their Union tickets. An old man told Mr Tyrrell it had been predicted in the year 1774 that the labourers would get the better of their masters in 1874, and they meant to fulfil the prophecy by means of the Union. Many of the farmers in this and other districts reported that the minds of the labourers, even those who had not joined the Union, were extremely unsettled. Some among them were under the impression that they were to have five or six acres of land apiece, or such an allotment as would make them independent of the farmer; and the more ignorant the labourer, the more firmly he believed this story.

Going about among the villages around Bury St Edmunds one could not but be struck with the comfortable cottages of the labourers. Of course, the exceptions are still numerous, but they are exceptions; and I heard on all sides of the efforts made by landowners to improve the position of

the labouring class in this respect. Indeed it is easy to see with one's own eyes the evidence of this resolve in the newly-built dwellings which dot the roadside. Some have been built with money advanced by one or other of the Land Improvement Societies. In other cases the landlords find themselves able to build from their own resources, and willing to build, which is still more important. Cottage property, at the best, is not directly remunerative; but landlords and farmers no longer discourage cottage-building, as they once did, for fear of harbouring paupers and swelling the rates. I cannot help thinking that a still stronger inducement to build roomy, decent cottages would be given if the labourers received the value of their earnings in money, without deduction, instead of a mixed payment in money and in kind. At present some of them live rent free; nearly all pay a nominal rental, from 1s. to 1s. 6d. a-week, for cottages which, upon this rental, do not yield more than 2 or 3 per cent on the cost of building. At Livermere I saw some cottages which had cost £340 the pair; and the rent paid, I believe, was £4, 10s. apiece. These cottages, it is true, were a good deal above the common run as to exterior; but the two living-rooms and capital pantry down-stairs, the three small bedrooms overhead, the wood-house, and the common oven and wash-house built in the rear, are a usual type of the new cottages which are rising in these villages. A row of less ornamental dwellings at Ousden, on the estate of Mr Mackworth Praed, had been built with bricks made close by; so that there would probably be a saving on them of 5s. or 6s. a thousand, besides the saving in cartage. These cottages also had three bedrooms, and two rooms down-stairs, with pantry and cellar. Behind them were the ovens and

coppers, with pig-sties, or rather pig-houses, so substantially were they built. Here, too, the rental was £4, 10s. for cottage and garden; and it is obvious, in such cases, that the labourer receives a portion of his wages in the shape of a deduction from rent. One result of such beneficence is, that it sets up a false standard of rent in every village, and so prevents the building of a better class of cottages by persons of small means who do not employ labour, or who cannot afford to build without receiving a direct return upon their outlay. The worst specimens of village dwellings one sees around Bury are infinitely better than those I described at Exning and Burwell. But in most cases the bad cottages belong to small proprietors, who have bought or inherited them—often a *damnosa hereditas* in more than one sense—and who have no encouragement or means to repair or improve them. This letting of cottages at a lower rental than they are worth is a distinct part of the perquisite system.

One advantage enjoyed by the inhabitants of some of these villages is the existence of small factories—if that be not rather too grand a name for them—at which clothing is made up, chiefly for export. A high square stack of brick, with a hideous uniformity of window, and a prominent chimney-stalk to deface the landscape still more effectually—such is the blot upon a quiet, secluded village which a “factory” suggests. But the building I went through at Barrow is little more than a substantial shed, with 20 sewing-machines at work, and as many women directing them. Sometimes, indeed, an old barn is utilised for the occasion. The materials generally come here already cut out, and most of the work is done by the women in their own homes. Besides the factory at Barrow, there

is one at Cowlinge, and a third at Chevington; and the women in at least a dozen adjacent villages come to these headquarters for the work, which they execute by hand, or by sewing-machines of their own, and must return by a specified day. When they have gained experience, and are clever at the work, they earn 5s. or 10s. a-week—sometimes more; and the result, of course, is, that you seldom see women working in the fields hereabouts. But village factories are rare, and you must go further for an explanation of the fact alleged by farmers wherever I have gone, that women are now obtained with difficulty for any kind of agricultural labour. They stay at home and mind the house; and the reason must be that there is less need for them to add to the husband's earnings by field-work. As one drove through the villages, it was easy to see that the Union had not the same general hold as in the Newmarket district. It was curious, also, to find strong Union developments in one village, and none, or next to none, in the next. Cowlinge, for example, was full of Unionists; and I saw, as usual, listless men lounging about the roads with the blue ribbon in their hats. At Wickhambrook, three miles off, and at Depden, close to the Marquess of Bristol's seat, hardly any labourers were in the Union. On Colonel Goodchild's estate at Great Wratling, five miles from Cowlinge, the Unionists struck for an advance of wages about a year prior to my visit, and were replaced by others. One farmer at Handon, with his sons, for some time did the greater part of the farm-work. At Glemsford the farmers discharged their Union labourers, though they had to attend even to their horses and stock, for their horse-keepers—generally a better kind of labourer, and specially trustworthy—chose to leave them rather than leave the

Union. In all these cases either the farmers obtained other labourers, or the Union hands gave up their tickets and came back upon the farmers' terms. The Unionist movement was "stamped out;" and therefore, in adopting the same plan upon a much larger scale, the farmers were encouraged by the knowledge of past, though partial, victories.

In a few instances, while discharging their Unionist hands, the farmers raised the wages of non-Unionists from 13s. to 14s. This increase was meant as an encouragement to the labourers who remained on the farms, but it operated also as a temptation to their comrades to leave the Union for the sake of the extra shilling. The more general feeling among the farmers, however, was, that in the face of a reduction of wages in the north to the amount of 10 or 20 per cent, and of a serious fall in the value of wheat and stock, this was a most inopportune time for any increase in wages. "I am not sure," one West Suffolk farmer wrote to me, "whether all my men will leave me; but if they do, I feel confident that I shall be able to work my farm to better advantage, as I shall no longer feel any delicacy in not employing men who have, perhaps, lived in the parish all their lives. Whatever will become of the old men I cannot imagine. One thing is certain—henceforth, they will never earn with the farmers what they have been accustomed to earn, although for certain jobs they are equal to the best men. The more I see of this agitation, the more certain I feel that it will benefit the farmer to the injury of a certain section of labourers. Hitherto, even when farmers have used machinery in the harvest-field and for other purposes, they have scarcely made any reduction—certainly they have made no proportionate reduction—in the number of

hands. Thus machinery has not reduced the farmers' expenses as it might have done and ought to have done ; and, on the other hand, it has tended to make the men lazy. But this is the farmers' fault." The writer is a practical agriculturist, who farmed altogether about 1000 acres, and farmed high, using the best machinery. He told me how some of his men left him just before the last harvest, and complained that, in the court of public opinion, men and masters do not seem to be tried by the same standard. Ingratitude on their part produces no impression, and leads to no public comment. " But what would have been said of me and other employers had we acted towards our men as mine acted towards me ? " It is unnecessary to enter into the merits of this particular dispute, but I found generally among the farmers a belief that they are misrepresented, or at least misunderstood. There is no class of men, they say, whose skill and capital yield so small a return as theirs, and are exposed to risks so entirely beyond human control. They are satisfied to work with this moderate return, sometimes because they have been brought up to the calling, sometimes because they enjoy the fresh air, the independence, the healthy exercise, and country life. They can make no great gains. Who ever heard of a millionaire farmer, or one who amassed by farming even the twentieth part of a million ? " Give me neither poverty nor riches " must be the farmer's utmost aspiration. The soil he tills may be unkindly. The seasons he cannot regulate, and in bad seasons the half-yearly rent-day seems to come thrice a-year. He cannot combine, like the coal-owners, to raise prices ; or work half-time, like the manufacturers, to diminish production : nor has he, like them, large reserves of accumulated profits which will carry him

triumphantly through a series of bad years.* All this time, in producing his chief crop, he must compete, not only with other British farmers, but with the whole of Europe and great part of America, not to mention other corn-growing countries, where the soil is richer or the climate more genial than his own. Surely, the farmer argues, when these are the difficulties inseparable from his calling, the farm labourer must cast in his lot with his employers upon the like conditions, content with moderate wages in return for fresh air and a good garden, a generally comfortable cottage, and work which is healthy and not exhausting. In the towns the labourer earns more wages, but spends more. His food and his lodgings run away with his surplus income; his wife is unable to practise the small economies which are possible in a village: and the latter end of the peasant who migrates to the town will be worse than his beginning. "At all events," the farmer continues, "if trades-unions are to add to the difficulties of farming, men of capital will not risk their capital in that enterprise; they will prefer to invest it at 5 per cent without risk, instead of attempting to gain a precarious 8 per cent out of the land."

Such was the sketch drawn by the farmers of their own position. As far as it went, it was a truthful sketch;

* "Nor can he, save in very exceptional cases" (a farmer adds), "increase his business or make more than a certain return. An enterprising man feels this limitation of his energies keenly. On most farms stock and corn must bear their due relative proportions. Only in exceptional cases—say, near a large town, or adjoining a railway station—can a man go out of the beaten track and make a larger return. Even in such cases the game is not always remunerative. Cattle are not like dry goods. You can't pack them away in a warehouse and wait for a favourable turn in the market, for the creatures meanwhile are 'eating their heads off.'"

though, perhaps, we see in it too little of the labourer, who likes to draw the picture from his own point of view. Leaving this topic, however, I may say a word upon the many instances told me of labourers who returned to their villages after migrating northwards. Such stories may be exceptional, but I have no reason to doubt their accuracy. Sometimes the men complained of the lodgings in which they were forced to "pig" with a lot of other people in a common lodging-room, "paying 6d. before they were allowed to set foot inside." Sometimes they complained of the violence and greed of the men with whom they were working, who "would not let them have a moment's rest when they had a shilling or two in their pockets till it was spent in drink." Often the work was far harder than they were used to. I heard of repeated instances in which agricultural labourers went to the coprolite-diggings on the borders of the Fens, where they could earn a *minimum* of 17s. or 18s. weekly, but soon returned to the nominal wages of 13s. with easier work. In other cases, where men left to better themselves in distant towns, higher wages did not mean a larger income, on account of the larger outgoings inevitable in a town life. In one village, out of nine men who went away eight returned, "and the ninth would have been glad to do so, but had a warrant out against him at home." In another case, men walked back to their village a distance of 150 miles, and came home shoeless, having sold their watches to support them on the way. The farmers said that these men were then at work as contentedly as possible, had given up the Union, and were much the better for their experiences. They found their 4s. a-day dearly earned by the hard work and rough life these wages entailed; and when they came

back, they were the steadiest workers in the village, and the least disposed to grumble. I daresay there are many cases in which men may have improved their condition by migration to towns as well as by emigration ; but it is well to bear in mind that a considerable proportion of the agricultural labourers, after trying town life with high wages, and country life with smaller wages, deliberately prefer the latter.

Though the Cambridgeshire and Suffolk farmers who resorted to the lock-out remained firm, attempts to extend the area of the lock-out failed. Thus the Norfolk farmers formed a Defence Association, but were satisfied to stand on the defensive. The Bedfordshire farmers adopted the same course ; and the farmers belonging to the Huntingdonshire Defence Association rejected a resolution which sought to pledge the members to lock out Union labourers at the request of any similar association. The very reasonable objection taken to such a resolution was, that it would pledge the Huntingdonshire farmers to side with Cambridgeshire and Suffolk in a dispute to which the former were no parties, and in the settlement of which they would have no voice. They therefore wisely refused to be dragged into war against the Union, whether it was a just or an unjust war.

The demand of the Union labourers for fewer hours as well as higher wages has not hitherto been mentioned ; but there were instances in which their notice to employers took this form. At Glemsford, in 1873, they asked for a rise of 2s. a-week in wages, and also asked to work six hours less per week. In that case one farmer declared that his able-bodied labourers were earning on an average 15s. a-week, and many were making (including piece-work and harvest-

work) 20s. a-week. A point worth notice is, that few labourers who work occasionally by piece and occasionally at stated wages know how much they really earn. I asked men who seemed more than ordinarily intelligent what their average weekly wages were, or their total yearly earnings in money, framing my question as simply and clearly as possible, and in not one instance did I get a definite reply. The labourers, like a good many farmers, keep no accounts. Still, you would expect a man to know within a little what he made during the year. All he knows, however, is, that "there's nothing left"—an answer which does not help one much to understand whether his income is a fair one. One farmer, near Bury, called his men together and said to them, "Do you consider that if an able-bodied man earns 18s. a-week throughout the year he ought to be satisfied?" The men did not quite know what to make of this Socratic method of beginning a controversy. But the farmer then clenched his question by a practical proposal. "If," he said, "you will undertake to give me what you have earned over and above 18s. a-week throughout the past year, supposing you to have earned more, I on my part will undertake to make up your weekly wages to 18s., supposing you have earned less;" and his labour-book was handy from which to make out the account. The men, however, were not prepared to run the risk of losing their earnings over 18s. According to the farmer's own description of the interview, "they did not know what to do." I gather that they were ignorant of the sum they had actually earned—an impression which my own inquiries confirmed. Of course it may be said that the men in this, as in other cases, knew their earnings, and preferred to speak only of the stated nominal wage, which does not

include piece-work, harvest-work, and "extras." I do not believe, however, that the men to whom I spoke had any wish to conceal their real earnings. They were honestly in the dark about the total, because they had never reckoned it up. One sturdy fellow, who complained that a man and his family could not live on 13s. a-week, but did not know what his "extras" came to, said he should be satisfied if he could earn a stone of flour a-day.* I have heard the same wish expressed by other labourers, though those were generally elderly men, not, I fancy, belonging to the new school of rural philosophers. The theory seems to be, that the price of six stones of flour coming in weekly would support the household, leaving a surplus for the purchase of other necessaries. But a farmer rudely disposed of this primitive mode of payment in kind. "When flour was dear it would be all very well. When flour was cheap, do you suppose a man would be equally willing to exchange his day's work for the price of the same quantity? He would laugh at us then if we offered him a stone of flour as a fair equivalent for his day's work. To base wages upon a sliding scale, rising and falling according to the current price of corn, is old-fashioned nonsense."

At one of the labourers' meetings on "The Severals" at Newmarket, Mr George Mitchell produced a labourer's balance-sheet, and maintained that at present prices a labourer, his wife, and four children could not subsist on less than a guinea a-week. I believe there are farmers

* "Last year the cry hereabouts," writes a farmer, "was a stone of flour a-day" (or 2s. 6d. to 2s. 9d.) "They were earning more all the while! How would they like the stone of flour *now* at 1s. 10d. ? I can confirm the statement that the *men have no idea what they earn*—or else they understate their earnings."

who would give these wages, abolishing perquisites, if they could be sure of steady, conscientious work in return. But loud and general complaints are made by masters of lounging and skulking. A story was told me of an inveterate idler who gave notice to his employer. The latter, who had two or three sons employed about the farm, was not much afflicted at parting with the man, but asked him, out of curiosity, why he was leaving. "The fact is," the man replied, "I have so many masters now that it takes all my time to look after you"—a *naïve* admission that he watched their coming, and only worked honestly while they were by.

CHAPTER III.

SETTLEMENT PROPOSED BY THE SPEAKER—REJECTED BY THE FARMERS—THE DUKE OF RUTLAND'S ADDRESS TO THE LABOURERS—THE WEST SUFFOLK FARMERS' ASSOCIATION—FEELING AGAINST ARBITRATION—THE LABOUR DIFFICULTY OVERCOME—CHANGE IN COURSE OF HUSBANDRY—LABOURERS' MEETING—SPEECH BY MR BALL—THE STRIKE IN THE WILFORD HUNDRED—WAGES—DELEGATES—THE UNION AT HOXNE—SPEECH BY SIR EDWARD KER-RISON.

IN the early part of May the Speaker of the House of Commons endeavoured, but without success, to bring about a settlement of the dispute between the farmers and their men. As one of the members for Cambridgeshire, Mr Brand was, both by property and position, eminently qualified to interpose in the interests of conciliation and peace. He suggested to the Newmarket Defence Association that an arrangement might be come to based upon a modification of any objectionable rules framed by the National or Federal Unions; and he recommended the farmers in that event to acknowledge the men's right to combine. The farmers, however, decided that the Association was not in a position to request the labourers' Unions to modify their rules.* Here, as in all other cases,

* A subsequent attempt made at Newmarket later in May by Mr S. Morley, M.P., and Mr Dixon, M.P., also failed. Mr Morley was

any proposal for direct recognition of the Unions went greatly against the grain. If the combination had been confined to men in a particular parish or district, the farmers would probably have had little hesitation in yielding to outside influence. But the conviction that terms were dictated to them by strangers annoyed and irritated the farmers beyond measure. "These men," they always repeated, "know nothing of the conditions of labour in the place where they may order or sanction a strike ; are ignorant of the state of the labour market, or even the amount of the wages paid in money or in kind ; and, whatever their motives, are mere mischief-makers." I rarely heard a farmer utter an unkind word against his labourers, except, perhaps, in the way of complaint that some among them did not work up to the proper standard. It was the interference of an executive sitting at Leamington, Lincoln, or London, which the farmers dreaded and could not bring themselves to brook. They thought that profitable farming would be impossible under such conditions, and entirely discredited anybody who said that things would probably go on pretty much as usual. As this feeling was not overcome, no arbitrators could interpose with hope of good results. The basis of arbitration was the admission of the men's right to combine, which carried with it of necessity the machinery common to all organisations—

the chairman, and Mr Dixon the secretary, of the London committee for collecting subscriptions on behalf of the labourers, and had at this time succeeded in bringing the strikes and lock-out to an end in Lincolnshire—the Farmers' Association in that county declaring that they had no desire to destroy the Unions, while the executive of the Lincolnshire Labour League suspended the objectionable rules. The Newmarket farmers, however, would not accept this intervention, and unanimously decided (May 26) to continue the lock-out.

a central working staff, paid officers, and so forth. That the relations between master and men might be less comfortable, through the combination of the latter, was very possible; but it was impossible for outsiders not to see that if the men thought it did them any good to belong to a Union, sooner or later the farmers must recognise their right to belong to it.

At this period of the struggle the Duke of Rutland issued the following circular to the labourers on his Chevely estate :—

“BUTE HOUSE, CAMPDEN HILL,
KENSINGTON, W., *May 8.*

“MY FRIENDS,—I have but little hope of being able to settle the unfortunate differences between you and your employers, but I should be truly glad if I could in any way assist in hastening an agreement between you and them, and therefore feel anxious to address a few words to you, especially as, during a very trying time, your conduct has been most exemplary. To prolong the contest must be injurious both to you and the farmers, but more so, in my opinion, to you than to them, as they have greater means at their command, and by various expedients, such as the importation of labour and the greater use of machinery, will be able to tide over the difficulty. I think you should also remember that wages have lately been raised, and I am sure there is a general feeling among the farmers that every man should have a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. Now, with respect to the Union, the question is, not whether it is lawful to belong to it, of which I think there can be no doubt, but whether it is a good thing, in the interests of the employed and the employer, that you should do so. I am strongly of opinion

that it is not a good thing, as those who advocate it are generally entire strangers, who do not live among you, and who know little of your position, or wants, or necessities. The relation of the farmer to the labourer must rest on one of two principles—either on that of the mercantile or the confidential. Hitherto it has been on the latter, and I hope you will allow it to remain so. The one treats the labourer as a man whose family and children are to be cared for and protected ; the other treats him as a machine out of whom the greatest amount of work is to be obtained at the lowest cost. It may be that the mercantile would be the best principle for the farmer's pocket, though I doubt it ; but I am sure no paltry saving of money could compensate for the loss of kindly feelings and friendly relations existing between the different classes here. This is what many of those who interfere wish to destroy. I have been accused of siding with the farmers in this struggle, and of having signed some paper of which I know nothing. It is true that when I heard that my tenants had decided to lock out the Union men I thought it right to support them ; and I did so, as I thought this was the best course, not in the interest of my tenants only, but in that of the labourers also. The farmers never locked out the men simply because they belonged to the Union. On the contrary, they employed Union men throughout the winter when they often had not remunerative work for them ; and it was not until the authorities of the Union issued orders to the men to strike in detail, parish by parish, that the farmers felt compelled to defend themselves. Another fact should not be overlooked by the labourers—that many who had gone to other parts of the country to seek for labour are now returning. I will only add my conviction

that the sooner this sad misunderstanding can be settled by mutual concession and agreement the better for both parties, and the better I shall be pleased.—I remain, yours faithfully,
RUTLAND."

The Duke of Rutland owns between 9000 and 10,000 acres of land in the parishes of Wood-Ditton and Cheveley. He therefore spoke as one having authority; but the labourers were unconvinced. They might be forced by necessity to give up their tickets, and self-interest might lead them to keep aloof from the Union, but the majority even of non-Unionist labourers sympathised with their locked-out brethren, and the antagonism of farmers and landowners simply strengthened the conviction of the whole labouring class that their interests were served by the Union. In many villages the non-Unionists subscribed for the benefit of the locked-out labourers; and the smaller tradesmen in the villages and country towns generally sympathised with the men. The reason was the same in both cases; it was felt that, whether the Union was what it professed to be or not, whether it was a good or a bad thing for agricultural labourers, they had a right to join it and try the experiment.

The members of the West Suffolk Farmers' Association met at Bury St Edmunds May 13, and Colonel Wilson was appointed president, Mr Hunter Rodwell, Q.C., chairman, Mr Henry Stanley, deputy chairman.

The deputy chairman presided, and said that in the course of a recent visit to Warwickshire, where this Union movement among the agricultural labourers originated, the farmers told him—"We all wish we had taken the step which the farmers are now taking in the Eastern counties by locking out, and then the Union would never have reached such a head."

A preface to the rules was adopted as follows: "This Association has been formed for the purpose of defence, to enable employers to determine the best mode of meeting the attacks to which they are or may be subjected by the action of the various Unions on behalf of the agricultural labourers." The entrance-fee of the Association was fixed at half-a-crown, with power to levy one penny per acre upon the rateable value of the holdings of members in any one year. Mr Huddleston, a landowner near Bury, said, that having once begun, the farmers must not draw back, but fight the Union now, so that they might never hear of it again. "There is no middle course," he continued; "arbitration stinks in the nostrils of us all, and I hope we shall have nothing to do with it." This gentleman's testimony against arbitration, and his advice to persist in the lock-out "in mercy to the labourers," seemed acceptable to the majority of the farmers present. A farmer who followed him took the same line. They had to deal with bondmen in dealing with the Unionist labourers, and must let outsiders know that they meant to hold their own in this matter. Large employers of labour elsewhere wished them well in their attempts to stamp out the Union, and he spoke strongly against the gentlemen who stood beside the Union agitators on the platform and gave them sympathy and support. The farmers did not interfere with trade disputes, about which they knew nothing. Why, then, should the employers of whom he spoke? The chairman admitted that in some districts the men might have been oppressed, but if so it was by the small farmers; whereas the men who were most dissatisfied were those who were paid the best and were employed by the large farmers. He also admitted that, as farmers must have labour, they must either seek

for it elsewhere or pursue other plans of husbandry. The Eastern counties were essentially a corn-growing country, and the people looked to them for corn ; but he had laid down as much of his land as possible in grass, and other farmers would doubtless do the same, and so carry on their business with much less labour than usual.

At Newmarket (May 26) the farmers were still more firmly resolved to accept no compromise ; and on the following day, when the executive of the West Suffolk Association recommended to their members a resolution withdrawing the lock-out as soon as the objectionable rules and the strike were withdrawn, there was such general reluctance to act on this suggestion that the resolution was not pressed.

At this period the labour difficulty seemed to have been got over, and the farmers declared that they were never better served by the men who remained in their employ, and were never more comfortable as employers. They also had found many ways of economising labour. They were still saving money by the lock-out ; and the best proof that they were not suffering from dearth of labour was, that not a voice was raised at their meetings in favour of compromise, arbitration, or even the most indirect recognition of the Union. " I have seven ploughs going to-day on my land," said one Exning farmer to me, " and not one Unionist among my men." " What sort are they ? " was the natural question ; and the answer was that they were oldish men and lads, whom a few months ago the farmer would never have thought of setting to the plough. " I do not mean to say that they drive the furrows as they used to be driven, but the work is done fairly well. I am quite satisfied with it, and want no extra labour except at harvest-time, when I shall get it, without any sort of doubt, at the wages which

will then be offered." Other farmers corroborated this statement in substance. One farmer told me he had been in the habit of sowing swedes, a crop which requires an outlay of £1 or 30s. an acre for artificial manure to produce them, while every root has to be cleaned and cut for the sheep.* This year, however, he would have a change of system. On 150 acres of land he would save £300 in labour and artificial manure by sowing white turnips and cole-seed, which would require little hoeing or other expense. Many farmers took the same course in this district. Swedes should be sown the first or second week in June; but as white turnips and cole-seed need be sown only in July, a month is saved in preparing the land. "I am quite sure," said one farmer, "that on this plan of farming I shall have a good return from my sheep and barley crop afterwards, though I shall not produce so much mutton as I used to send to market."

In conversation, the farmers expressed great irritation with the delegates for the exaggeration in which they indulged, and the abuse levelled, not at farmers alone, but at landowners and clergy besides.† It did not happen to me to hear the violent and foolish talk attributed

* "Swede turnips," writes a farmer, "do not necessarily require artificial manure. I neither manure for swedes, nor do I cut them for sheep (save in exceptional cases). It is good practice to do both, but is not general."

† Here is a copy of a card full of Biblical texts distributed among the labourers who assembled upon "The Severals":—

• "From the farm labourers of Christian England to their arch-enemies, Ellicot, Stradbroke, Rutland, Bristol, Walsingham, North, Salisbury, and Company (with power to add to their number).

"Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

to some of the delegates, but it was easy to see that the stiff attitude of the farmers was in great part owing to their indignation at the unjust attacks made upon them by the Union delegates, and the discontented and hostile spirit thus stirred up among the labourers without adequate cause. The attacks made upon the Duke of Rutland at some of the Newmarket meetings showed that the greatest consideration and kindness by a landlord will not save him from virulent abuse. At one of the usual open-air meetings of labourers held upon "The Severals" the chief speaker was Mr Ball, who has been an agricultural labourer and local Methodist preacher, and speaks with a rough eloquence and point very acceptable to the labourers and the women who accompanied them. He began by repudiating a charge that he had uttered curses upon employers. This was a calumny, he said,

'Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton, ye have condemned and killed the just.' 'I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, saith the Lord.' 'Hear, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel. Is it not for you to know judgment, who hate the good and love the evil?' 'Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, that ye may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes.' 'Forasmuch, therefore, as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat, ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins, afflicting the just, taking bribes, and turning aside the poor from their right.' 'Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong, that useth his neighbour's services without wages, and giveth him not for his work.' 'If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, He that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.' 'Moreover, the profit of the earth is for all.'"

and he appealed to the labourers present whether they had ever heard him use such language. He had not done so, but before his work was ended he meant to make the country ring with language ten times more bitter than any he had hitherto used, until the labourers' cause was advocated through every hamlet and village, and men knew what Unionism really was. The National Union had found 700,000 farm labourers worse treated and in a worse position than the serfs of Russia. Yet Russian serfs were ruled by a despotic prince, while we were governed by statesmen. He saw that on many farms new cottages were being built, and he warned the men that if they went to live there they would forfeit their freedom and have to work for pretty much what the farmer chose to give them. The 700,000 farm labourers had been down in the ditch and under the thumb-screw, unable to say their souls were their own, bound to their villages, where, if they asked for more wages, they were taught a bitter lesson by persecution. According to the Duke of Rutland's version (Mr Ball continued) the labourers were raised to a better position through the kindness and humanity of employers. You might as well expect the labourers to understand Egyptian hieroglyphics as to understand this. What was expected from them in a village was a deal of bowing and scraping. If they took off their hats to the village clergyman he would perhaps reward them by saying, "How do you do?" It was funny for one paid servant to expect this homage from another. Mr Ball, however, said he did not want to teach labourers disrespect to others, but respect to themselves; and he declared that the result of the Union had been to inspire among them greater independence of thought and feeling, greater freedom as to the

present, and more hope as to the future, than he had ever seen among them in his life. They had already got one foot across the threshold of liberty, and they would stand a good squeeze before withdrawing it. The lock-out must come to an end one day—the Union never. It would stand, developing manhood, perpetuating right feeling, and the result would be in England an honest and industrious peasantry, full of intelligent and manly dignity. Why had not labourers' wages risen with those of other classes, and with the rise of provisions? Because of the grasping parsimony of the land monopolists. Another reason was, that the men had been living in ignorance of their value, and kept from asking for higher wages through a fear of being punished for asking. Why were they to be dependent upon the good feeling or charity of employers? If they did an honest day's work they were entitled to a fair day's wage. He charged the rich landowners and farmers with being the cause of their ignorance and poverty, and if these classes stood aloof now, the labourers must help themselves. The Union was a grand phalanx formed to do right and compel others to do right. He was truly sorry any Union was needed, but, having got it, they must try to use it wisely; and if the labourers were ever sufficiently united, and then treated employers as employers were now treating them, it would be the greatest grief of his life. It was his object, and that of the Union, to teach the labourers to do to others what they wished should be done to themselves; to teach them, in short, a higher and nobler life. For this the delegates were called demagogues, incendiaries, and teachers of communism. Communism, as generally understood, meant bloodshed and crime; but the communism he meant was a community of

interest, of feelings, and manhood, and if that was communism he would cherish it to the day of his death. He maintained that the lock-out showed a bitter spirit on the part of farmers towards their men, and if the farmers preached goodwill till doomsday the men could never forget the lock-out. There were cries of "Never" from the crowd; and at the close of the meeting three cheers were raised for the Lincolnshire farmers, Mr Ball leading the cheers, and stating that he would be just as ready in applauding the Cambridgeshire and Suffolk farmers if they would act likewise.

Around Woodbridge and Saxmundham at this time, May 29, the number of labourers locked out was greater than in any other district in Suffolk. The Lincolnshire Labour League also had branches in East Suffolk; and as the number of locked-out men on their books was not large, they could afford to pay a larger weekly stipend than was paid by the National Union. To an adult labourer locked out or on strike the Lincolnshire League gave 10s. a-week, with an additional shilling for the wife if he was married, and an extra allowance for children. Under this liberal scale I heard of cases in which men were receiving more money for doing nothing than they were paid while in full work, though this state of things could hardly have been contemplated by the executive. The married members of the National Union, in whose favour no such distinction was drawn, made great sacrifices in adhering to that Union; and one could not help admiring them for their stanchness under such circumstances in a cause which they believed to be right. At any time they could obtain work by giving up their Union tickets, and some did now and then give way; but after nearly three months of enforced idleness,

and of pinching want at home, it was astonishing that more of them did not yield to this temptation. I heard even farmers express their admiration of the true British stubbornness and pluck shown by the men ; and a bystander could not help having a still stronger feeling when he saw the privations which these poor labourers and their wives and children were voluntarily suffering rather than desert the Union, and so surrender what they spoke of as their " sacred right " to combine.

In justice to the farmers, it should be remembered that in this district of East Suffolk, as around Newmarket, it was the men who began the war. Around Bury St Edmunds the lock-out was adopted chiefly from a desire to support the Newmarket farmers, who banded together in consequence of the strike at Exning, and to avoid being cut off in detail. The farmers in the Wilford Hundred, of which Woodbridge is the centre, were called upon to resist a strike in their very midst. In the month of March 1874, twelve large farmers in the Wilford Hundred, employing altogether about 170 men, were served with a written notice, headed " National Agricultural Labourers' Union," and signed " the Committee," demanding an increase of a shilling upon the nominal weekly wages paid to them—13s. " A Farmer of the Wilford Hundred," in a pamphlet which was widely circulated, said that the occasion for this demand was inopportune, " as the price of both corn and stock was rapidly declining." The farmers, he added, " felt that this request for an increase of wage should have come spontaneously from their men, and should not have been thrust upon them by third parties who must be imperfectly acquainted with the relations between the employer and employed of the locality." The declining price of agricul-

tural produce was a very fair plea to be urged against a rise in wages, but it did not justify a lock-out of men simply because they belonged to a Union. However, I will now let the "Farmer of the Wilford Hundred" tell his own story:—

"The farmers had heard from various sources, chiefly from the declarations of the delegates, that strikes were to be ordered in rapid succession, until the men's wages were nearly doubled. The Union was to adopt Sir Garnet Wolseley's policy with a retreating enemy, and keep on hitting. The men were to strike against the barley-sowing, to strike in hay-time, and again in harvest, until wages were raised, some said to 20s., some to 30s. per week. The farmers knew perfectly well that to yield to this first demand of the Union would be but to encourage further strikes and disturbances. They felt that the fight must come off this year, and that it was better it should take place at once than at the more critical season of hay or harvest. They therefore took no notice of the anonymous papers which they had received, and waited the issue. The influence of the Union was fully proved by the fact that on the following pay-day all the men on these twelve farms left their work and declined to return. Of course, such an occurrence was at once widely known. Neighbouring farmers, whose men had not been ordered to strike, appealed to their men to volunteer and assist the farmers whose men had left in their more pressing work, such as cattle-feeding and barley-sowing. As might have been expected, the appeal was a failure. Some said, 'No, thank ye, sir. We are Union men, and we mean to strike next.' Others said, 'We ain't Union men, sir, but we dare not go. We shall get our heads knocked off,' &c. This being the situation, we should have been thankful had the Bishop of Manchester 'come

over and helped us.' The 'Times' says we had simply to agree not to give the rate of wages demanded, and the essential effect of a lock-out would have been produced. I fail to understand what this means. Were we to stand by and see the twelve farmers ruined by the conduct of their men, who were supported, meanwhile, by their comrades in our service? The farmers had no ill-feeling against the men, and it was only after the gravest deliberation that the lock-out was determined upon. They called their men together, and in many cases spoke to them long and earnestly; urged that it was not, by any means, a question of wages alone; and told them that, bearing in mind what had occurred during the past six months, the conduct and speeches of the delegates, and the ill-feeling which must result if such proceedings were continued, they were driven to resolve that their men must either leave the Union or leave their employers. In most cases the reply amounted to this: 'Well, sir, we have no fault to find with you; you are a very fair master, and mean right: but these Union folks do say as how they are to do great things for us; they do say they are going to do away with this Queen and have a Republic, and that all the land will be equally divided atwixt us.' Combat such notions as we might, so firmly were they impressed with the belief that they were in some way 'to get the land,' that they decided in large numbers to 'stand by the Union.' I may here mention, in justice to the men, that one of the reasons which induced them to join the Union was, that they expected it to be a good benefit club. I have said elsewhere that no Union which promotes strikes and defends lock-outs can ever keep up a sound benefit club.

"The 'Times' asks, 'Why farmers should entertain such

a dread of the Union?' I reply, that had the Union been conducted by temperate and able men, with the true interest of the labourer and his work at heart, who, while advancing the claims to better house accommodation and other advantages to which he is doubtless entitled, nevertheless admitted that the rights of other classes must also be considered; had these delegates met employers and employed, and fairly urged the cause of the latter, I am quite sure that many employers would gladly have listened to any reasonable proposal which had for its object the amelioration of the condition of their work-people. Further, I believe that many employers would have supported such a Union. But neither the men nor their advisers have acted in this spirit. On the contrary, every village alehouse has been for months past the centre to which, at frequent intervals, the labourers have flocked to hear from their delegates the most astounding statements. At these meetings the men are openly told that they have been 'robbed of the land, which is their birthright;' that 'landlords, farmers, and parsons are the oppressors of the poor;' that the labourer is 'worse treated and lives a worse life than an African savage, or a slave on an American plantation;' that 'such serfdom and slavery as that of the English agricultural labourer the world has never seen;' that 'God made all men equal'—that 'He never intended that there should be rich and poor;' that all the upper classes are 'plunderers and thieves,' 'non-workers,' 'living immoral and luxurious lives, and growing fat on the labour of the poor man;' that 'royalty, aristocracy, and the middle-classes are a curse to the land—that the time has come for them to be swept away;' that if the agricultural labourers will hold well together they will soon ruin the farmers and the landlords,

and compel them to emigrate, when the State will take possession of the land thus depreciated in value, and let or make it over on favourable terms to its rightful owners, the noble peasantry.

"To an educated man these wild theories appear as ridiculous as their realisation may be impracticable. But, unfortunately, their effect upon the mind of the simple and untutored labourer is serious indeed. He is unable to see the fallacies propounded. He has been told so often and so vehemently of late that he is an ill-used man, that he begins to believe he is so, almost against his conviction to the contrary. The result is, that on the one side we see the labourers led by a set of the wildest communistic demagogues; on the other side the farmers, compelled in self-defence to resort to a 'lock-out,' at great loss to themselves, in the hope of bringing the Union to reason, and of dispelling dangerous popular delusions."

I have quoted from this pamphlet because it was generally regarded as the ablest justification of the lock-out which appeared from the farmers' point of view.* But the farmers with whom I talked declared they were saving money, instead of sustaining "great loss," by the lock-out;

* "In justice to the farmers of the Wilford Hundred," says one of their number, "it must be remembered that during the preceding two years several strikes had taken place in the neighbourhood, most of which had proved abortive, and had served only to make the Union most unpopular with the farmers. For example, on the farm of one very large occupier, noted for his liberality and kindness, the men uncovered two stacks and commenced threshing. All at once, at a preconcerted signal, they ordered the engineman to stop; all came down from their work, and declined to recommence unless a large advance in wages with less hours of work were at once conceded. The men said they had their Union at their back, and used all sorts of threatening language; but the employer stood firm, and after remaining out of work

and very few of them seemed willing to allow the intervention of delegates, however temperate. Much wild language may have been used by these men, especially the less prominent and responsible among them, in the more remote villages, where the fear of publicity was not before their eyes, and did not restrain their tongues. I heard strong language used also at some of the meetings I attended, but certainly nothing like the trash quoted by the pamphleteer about sweeping away the middle and upper classes and dividing the land. Men like Mr Taylor, the general secretary of the National Union, Mr Ball, and Mr Crick, are not justly liable to the charge of being "the wildest communistic demagogues;" and the very way to increase the influence of such men was by at one moment ignoring them, as the farmers did, and at another time overwhelming them with violent and indiscriminate abuse.

I may add some details respecting the Wilford Hundred. They are summarised from the pamphlet already quoted. The writer says that before the strike and lock-out the men in this district earned on an average during the year

a fortnight most of them returned to their employment. These tactics were repeated on other farms, usually with much the same result; but, of course, at very serious loss and inconvenience to the farmers. In fact, in such a business as farming, in which every fine day must be made the most of, such interference with work is ruinous. There are no surplus profits to 'come and go upon,' and *ruinous* is the right word to use, and is *not* a figure of speech or a mere phrase. The farmers, therefore, knew well enough how serious a matter it would be if strikes, instead of being, as hitherto, desultory and occasional, were to become a regular policy on the part of the labourers, to be resorted to systematically and on any and every pretext. I must think that these facts go far to excuse the conduct of the farmers, if any excuse is needed."

about 18s. per week. He cites as an example on his own farm the earnings of a man with a wife and eight children, whose ages varied from 18 months to 17 years. The man earned 18s. per week; the eldest son, aged 16, earned 10s. per week; the second, aged 12, earned 4s. 6d.—total earnings, 32s. 6d. The eldest daughter, aged 17, was out at service. The average weekly earnings during the year of 12 men in the service of this farmer are as follow, the number of the family being also given. It should be premised that the nominal wage of each of the men was 13s. or 14s. a-week, but that in some cases wife or children assisted in making up the sum stated. 1. Man, wife, and child, 19s.; 2. Man, wife, and two children, 21s.; 3. Man, wife, and four children, 21s.; 4. Man, wife, and seven children, 32s.; 5. Man and wife, 18s.; 6. Man (old), 18s. 6d.; 7. Man and wife, 18s.; 8. Man, wife, and child, 18s.; 9. Man, wife, and three children, 21s. 6d.; 10. Man, wife, and two children, 20s.; 11. Man, wife, and four children, 24s.; 12. Single man (young), 18s. These amounts are described as being “rather understated than otherwise.” The explanation of the increase shown by these figures upon the nominal wages is, that in the Wilford district a great deal of work is given out by the piece. The writer adds: “Even during the winter, the worst time of the year, I know that many farmers can show by their books that able-bodied men have earned 15s., 15s. 6d., and 16s. a-week continuously since Michaelmas. To this must be added the extra money (beyond the 15s. or 16s. a-week) earned during hay-time and harvest, which amounts to £6 or £7, or about 2s. 6d. per week to be spread over the year. I have repeatedly heard farmers say that if they could trust their men to work fairly, without the

stimulus afforded by piece-work, they would gladly give them 17s. to 20s. all the year round (to include harvest). As it is, the labourer earns in the week sometimes 13s., 14s., 15s., 17s., 20s., 25s., 30s., yet, through his Union, trades on public sympathy by representing that his wages are 13s. a-week only. Many men who struck last March for 14s. a-week were at the time earning 15s. and 16s., and had earned that sum continuously from Michaelmas."

This, of course, was the testimony of an interested witness, but it agreed substantially with the statements made and with the labour-books shown to me in other districts. At Exning, the scene of the strike in the Newmarket district, more money was paid for harvesting in 1873 than was ever paid before—over £10 in some cases. Mr Staples, an Exning farmer, whom Mr Morley, M.P., visited in May, found from his books that the average earnings of his men during the year preceding the strike was 17s. 6d. in cash. Mr Sabin, another Exning farmer, who has held land in that parish for nearly 20 years, and, until lately, farmed 1200 acres, went still further. For some time past he had adopted the system of piece-work wherever it was possible to do so, and the result was satisfactory both to master and men. Its effect in increasing wages was such that Mr Sabin, who is not given to exaggeration, placed before me, in writing, in the Newmarket manner, "an open challenge that my men have earned more money per annum than any farm hands have earned in any parish in the Eastern counties." The material point is, that the labourers employed by Mr Staples and Mr Sabin, and receiving these wages, were not satisfied with them, and struck for an increase of 1s. upon their *minimum* weekly pay of 13s., just

as the labourers did in the Wilford Hundred, ignoring the *maximum* and the average. The "Wilford Farmer" deals with the argument that, if the nominal wage were increased, incidental earnings would mount up in like proportion. He doubts the cogency of the argument; because, if wages are raised, the rent of cottages would be raised; and few cottages in the Wilford district are rented at more than 1s. 9d. per week—most at 1s. to 1s. 6d. per week only. I have already described the Exning cottages. Mr Sabin, in his letter, admits that "some of the cottages are bad, and, what is worse, many of them have no gardens or allotments;" adding, "but, as a tenant-farmer, this is not my fault." The "Farmer of the Wilford Hundred" says of the cottages in his district that "some are very good, some tolerably so, some very bad. But the same may be said of town dwellings." He instances other advantages enjoyed by the Wilford labourers: 1. "Fire-wood free, or nearly so; horse and cart free of charge for carting manure, &c., to allotment, or for cartage of coals." Fire-wood is a frequent perquisite. Where allotments exist the free cartage of manure is also common, and so with regard to coals. At Exning there was a small charity fund, which in one winter was applied in buying coal at cost-price, the farmers carting it free from Newmarket. 2. "Payment of wages in most cases the same, wet or dry." I do not think this can be set down as a favour to the labourer. It should be a right. The hiring ought not to be a daily, but a weekly hiring, the farmer taking his chance of the weather; otherwise the position of the labourer, liable to be turned off during wet or unfavourable weather, would be pitiable indeed. The next advantage allowed to the men is a new one to me. 3. "In case of sickness, the difference

between the allowance from the club and the men's wages is made up by some employers." I do not think this can be a common practice. Then follows a privilege upon the value of which I have often insisted. 4. "Nearly every man has a good garden or an allotment. Many of them keep pigs and fowls." The "Wilford Farmer" adds: "I do not think the men are worse off than the mechanics of large towns, who earn a higher wage, but whose expenses for rent, clothes, food, &c., are higher, and who have not the same advantages in other respects. They are beyond comparison more comfortably circumstanced than the unskilled labourers of towns. . . . The condition of the labourer is not so good as I could wish it to be, but it is improving rapidly; and but for the interference of well-meaning but ill-informed enthusiasts, would improve still faster." Mr Sabin wrote to the same effect. "It is very easy," he says, "for an agitator to make any servants dissatisfied, however well, on the whole, they may have been treated. It comes to this"—I give the substance, not the words of his letter, avoiding personal references: "The labourers' Unions could not live a month except for outside support. Certain manufacturers, large employers in towns, and other gentlemen, therefore, by their subscriptions, really maintain agitators to unsettle the minds of our labourers even when, as at Exning, their wages exceeded those paid elsewhere. Suppose, in like manner, we farmers were to hire delegates to harangue the work-people of these employers every Saturday afternoon, and use the most violent, abusive language against men who, no doubt, like ourselves, have tried to be good and kind masters. Don't you think it would be easy to make the men dissatisfied and set class against class? Don't you think it would be easy

to find individual cases of hard treatment, to persuade the whole body of workmen that they were underpaid and badly treated, and that their employers were responsible somehow for the overcrowding, the want, the squalor which might be found in many of their homes?" This was the farmers' *tu quoque*, and in some form or other you heard it wherever you went. It was this "interference" by strangers, whether philanthropists or paid delegates, which the farmers so violently resented; and hard words did far more to inflame the contest than the demand for a shilling or two of extra wages.

It will be gathered from the system of wage-paying around Woodbridge, as in other parts of Suffolk, that an additional shilling per week upon the nominal wage does not necessarily mean an additional shilling in every week throughout the year, but only in those weeks when the hay or corn harvest is not pressing, and piece-work in ploughing, hoeing, and other employments is not possible. The pecuniary issue raised by a demand of another shilling is therefore of comparatively small moment. But "foreign" intervention makes those dissatisfied who were satisfied before, introduces unwonted and disturbing elements in conducting the business of the farm, and by undeserved abuse wounds the feelings of employers, a large proportion of whom are conscious that they have meant well and done well to their men. I heartily wish that some of the gentlemen who have interested themselves on behalf of the farm labourers, and are connected directly or indirectly with the Unions, would try to moderate the language of the delegates. The misfortune is, that such language acts and reacts. It is perhaps too much to expect from the farmers the philosophic calmness and indifference which an out-

sider feels as he listens to these words of heat. For the farmer, unused to give and take in a war of words, and unable to laugh them off in that or any other way, they are full of serious and dreadful meaning. He can make no allowance for angry and exaggerated expletives uttered under excitement; and he feared, not without reason, the effect of such language upon the ignorant crowd to whom it was addressed during the lock-out. So he turned fiercely upon the delegates with the poor taunt that they were "paid;" the delegates, naturally sensitive on this point, retorted, and so the circle went on ever widening. I have said that the way to increase the influence of these delegates is by at one time ignoring them and at another time accusing them of being hired incendiaries. There may, no doubt, be bad as well as good men among them; but to charge them in the mass with being venal and insincere is not only a crime but a blunder. Such as they are, these men have acquired the confidence of the labourers; and it is a mistake in policy, therefore, either to exchange invectives with them or refuse them recognition.

In a few cases a different course was taken. A meeting of the Hoxne branch of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union was attended by Sir Edward Kerrison, who, in the presence of the Union delegates, deprecated the strong language which had been used by some of their number, and gave some wholesome advice to the labourers who were present. It was unfortunate, I think, that other men of influence in the country—the natural leaders, one may say, of the two classes who were at issue—held aloof from the meetings of the labourers, instead of trying to guide them aright and to counteract any mischief which might arise among them from evil counsel and ignorance.

At all events, here was an instance in which a large landowner tried a different policy with complete success. "It would be odd indeed," said Sir Edward Kerrison, addressing the men, "if a meeting should be held in the village close to my house, and I—who am constantly among you, who am to be seen in this village and in the surrounding villages almost every day among the labouring people, who speak to them, who live among them, and who know more about them than I do about any other class around me—should be unwilling, or anything but glad, to meet you." Having thus got the ear of the people, he spoke his mind frankly, in homely pointed language, which was received by the men in an excellent spirit. As they stood, he said, the Union rules were arbitrary; and it was impossible that farming could be carried on under them if, at a season when it was absolutely necessary that certain work should be done at a certain time, labourers turned round on the farmer and said—"Unless you give us another shilling a-week, the beet you want put in shall not be put in, and the barley you want sown shall go unsown." Sir Edward explained to the men the difficulties of a farmer; the distinction between him and an ordinary manufacturer who "has only to put his fires out, and the only harm to him is that his machinery stands idle; whereas the farmer has his horses and cows and sheep to consider—has to run the risk of bad weather which may ruin his crops, and of disease which may carry off his stock." When the lock-out was commenced in the Wilford Hundred, he said, he called his tenants together and asked them whether, instead of joining the lock-out, they would be willing to recognise the Union, based, not upon the arbitrary rules which then existed, but upon principles which would be useful to the

poor man, instead of injuring him, as such rules would. His tenants declared their willingness to support him ; and since then the lock-out in Lincolnshire had been settled upon the principle advocated in his letter to the 'Times'—the withdrawal of the objectionable rules. The farmers must not be pressed unduly by the men, for the profits of farming would not support such demands. Then he continued :—

“ Recollect, I stand in the position of landlord. I am the landlord of the tenant-farmer and of the labourer. I have to protect the tenant-farmer who puts his capital on my land, and I have to protect the labourer who occupies my house, and who seeks to improve his condition ; and in everything I say, it will, I hope, be seen that what I want is justice to both parties, and not justice to one alone. Since you have lived in the parish of Hoxne, have you ever known the poor people of this parish so contented and so well off as at the present moment ? I want to keep you so, that there may be peace, and that you may not feel the terrible lock-out which is now going on with such suffering and privation in different parts of the country. You know that capital can, if it likes, economise labour. There is no doubt about that. Many crops need not be sown if there is a difficulty in hoeing them. There is steam-ploughing and other machinery that can be brought into use ; and if people choose to grow one crop instead of another, they may dispense with a large amount of labour. The result of wages getting beyond a certain amount will be that the abler men will get full employment at higher wages, but those who are weak and old will feel the consequences. You will naturally say to me, ‘ Will you tell us how the present state of things may be brought to an end ? ’ I have been in communication with people all

over England since I wrote to the newspapers a month ago, endeavouring to get this matter peaceably settled in some way or other, because I know that, although the farmers may suffer, the labourers will suffer ten times more. But I will tell you honestly what are the obstacles in the way. There are gentlemen who have come here to-day, one of whom has spoken very temperately, and, no doubt, he and others will, after I have done, speak very temperately; but there are others who are not so temperate, and who are perpetually trying to set you against the farmers, and the farmers against you. Now, I ask you, what is the object of doing so? If your cause is a good one, what do you want to gain by abusing anybody? What is the use of it? Why learn songs to sing in the streets, when you meet the farmers, in order to annoy them? Why sing, 'How do you like it now, farmer?' Why should not the farmers turn round and sing songs at you and say, 'How do you like it now, boys, that you are locked out?' The one is quite as fair as the other; and the recriminations in which some indulge against those who are opposed to them—as if abuse, and not argument, were the proper weapon—are much to be deplored. Argument is the only thing by which your cause should be advocated; you should rely on what is right, and not on abuse and on stirring up bitter feelings. Did you ever know abuse to do you the smallest good? Is it not rather the case that an abusive thing said of another makes you an enemy? . . . You forget that you may do the deepest injustice to a very large class of people. There are farmers who have the kindest feeling towards their labourers, and it may be that there are others who are quite the reverse, just as there are good and bad landlords, and just as there are good and bad

men among you. I know there are some of you men who won't do a full hard day's work if they can help it ; and then, again, there are good men who are willing to work to the bone. We must deal with the things of the world as we find them ; and what I say is this—if you want this matter settled, you, who are a portion of some 150,000 men in the Unions, have a poor heart if you don't say to those who represent you, and whom each of you pays, ' Now we want this settled ; so, for goodness' sake, let wisdom and not bitterness form the foundation of your speeches.' I would say the same of one newspaper. I have seen others in which there were excellent articles, but by one every sort of thing has been instilled into the labourers' minds to irritate and excite them, and the farmers and every one concerned. Is that right ? Is it useful ? Is it any good to any mortal living ? No, it is not only no good, but if you want to go straight to the workhouse, the way is to follow the directions so given to you. If some articles which I have read in one paper were read by artisans, who are people who have had more education, that paper would not be taken by any of them, because they would see that what that paper holds out to you is a sort of paradise that you will never reach in this world. We shall all be the better for a little stirring about, whether we are labourers, farmers, or landlords. You want the landlords to build you better cottages and to give you a bit of land everywhere as I have endeavoured to do here. Many of you are asked to emigrate, but the great proportion of you don't want to go ; and those who don't want to go, and have not their hearts in it, rarely or never do any good when they do go. That being so, your Union would have been quite unable to support the men who are locked out. You only

pay 2d. a-week, and how could that support 3000 men out of work? The attempt was made to stamp out the Union. But you are part of a large family—the family of the Trades-Unions. You stand in the position of a poor relation to a rich one; and if it had happened, as is sometimes the case, that the rich relation was not kind to the poor relation, this Union would have gone. You are dependent upon your richer relations. All the different Trades-Unions of England have come to the rescue of the principle of Trades-Unions. If you had committed any breach of the law—which, thank God, you have not—the public support which has been provided for you would disappear. I am thankful to see the good conduct of the men; and I exhort you, if you have to suffer, come out of it as men, without having done any act of violence, or anything of any sort that will hurt your cause or injure it in any one's eyes. . . . One great point for you to aim at is independence. That object is only to be gained by laying up money for your old age. You will see that if wages are increased it will be the younger men who will benefit, but the older men will be more likely to go to the wall than at present. If you have a desire that they should be better off, the only plan is, not the raising money for strikes all over the country, but laying by for your old age, and making yourselves in this way independent of everybody. . . . Here is neutral ground on which we can all stand—while the man puts by for himself in his old age, he may be aided and assisted in a proper way by his employers and those who may be in a position to help him. But the object of a Union is mainly to spend your funds in furthering the rise of wages to the younger men. I should be ready, if I had the strength, to go to every

meeting of Union people—always understanding that I do not belong to the Union, but go as a private individual, as a landlord of this county, and as a friend of the labouring population—and try to induce them, of their own free will, to withdraw any attempt at intimidating men who, be they good or bad, must be your employers. If you wish to change from this place to other districts, go. If you desire to go abroad, go. But if you want to remain here, you can only remain under such conditions towards the employing class that they shall not feel that you are perpetually acting as their enemies, or retain the power of stabbing a man in the dark, as you do when you give him notice one week of what you intend to do the next. In another county there are living in the same parish two gentlemen of the same name, one of whom is a representative of the Labour League and the other a farmer. One day, as the farmer was sitting at breakfast, a letter came addressed in his name, which, supposing it was for him, he opened. It was as follows: ‘Dear sir, we are not prepared to strike in your village next week, not having the funds.’ The letter was, of course, intended for the delegate, whose name was the same as the farmer’s; but it was not a very pleasant thing for the farmer, who had been in constant communication with his men, and had not heard a word from them that they were dissatisfied with their wages, to learn in this way that they wanted to strike. It is impossible that farmers can go on subject to such conditions. I have come here to tell you the honest truth, for it is a subject to which I have devoted many years of my life. I have watched what has gone on, and I say plainly that if this irritating language continues, instead of employers and yourselves being in unison, you will be for years at variance.”

After the delegates had spoken, one of them, Mr Jackson, proposed a vote of thanks to Sir E. Kerrison for coming among them. The motion was seconded by another delegate and carried, after which three hearty cheers were given for Sir Edward and Lady Caroline Kerrison. It should be added that the village meeting at which these speeches were made was preceded by a dinner, over which a farmer presided and helped to carve the joints. I cannot but think that the example thus set in Hoxne might have been followed with advantage elsewhere, and that if farmers as well as landlords had mixed more with the men, and had tried to understand these Agricultural Unions in their earlier history, objectionable rules might have been modified, employers and employed would have shown greater sympathy and respect for each other, and much of the bitterness of this quarrel might have been avoided.

CHAPTER IV.

THETFORD—WAGES—LONG HIRINGS—"EGGING" BY LABOURERS—
POACHING—FARMERS' MEETING AT BURY ST EDMUNDS—EN-
CLOSURE OF COMMONS—FARMERS AND LABOURERS IN NORFOLK—
NORFOLK DEFENCE ASSOCIATION—SPEECH BY LORD WALSINGHAM
—"HAYSEL"—THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

IN the Thetford district the nominal weekly wages were 14s. Why they should be 1s. higher than in most of the districts of West Suffolk it was hard to say; but the fact so far justified the labourers' Union in trying to raise the scale in those districts where only 13s. and even 12s. were paid. The Union was strong in the neighbourhood, and one cannot fairly say the men were badly off. Here is an account of the wages paid upon the Knettishall Farm, rented by Mr W. Mathew, to a man 68 years old, who was the lowest paid among the able-bodied labourers employed: 47 weeks at 14s., £32, 18s.; piece-work over day-wages, £2, 15s. 8d.; five weeks' harvest wage, £8, 19s.—total, £44, 12s. 8d. A labourer of this age in a town would find it difficult to earn such wages. This peasant pays a rent of £3 a-year for a most comfortable cottage, and has brought up nine children without parochial help, save on one occasion during a long illness. My note concerning him is that, though he never went to

school, he is a good reader—self-taught, with a little help from children who have been taught in the village school. I came upon many instances in which children so educated had in turn taught their parents to read and even to write. Such cases have a pathos of their own. They ought to rejoice the most grudging taxpayer and give new strength to village teachers, who work sometimes under a weary, depressing sense that they are working almost in vain. This old man of 68 had been employed for 60 years upon the Knettishall Farm—for he began work when eight years old—and in 1874 received a premium from the Suffolk Agricultural Association for long servitude. He was at first induced to join the Lincolnshire League; but being wise in his generation, upon second thoughts withdrew. War is for the young and lusty, not for the infirm and old—and, unhappily, this labour dispute assumed many of the hard aspects of war. Mr Mathew said he had never reduced the wages of his old men. “My shepherd, now over 70 years of age, now receives the same wages he has had for 30 years; and to enable him to hold his situation, I find him additional help at times. Another labourer, over 70, has been ‘lord of the harvest’ for 48 harvests upon the farm. He now receives 2s. a-day. I did not raise his wages when I increased those of able-bodied men. Another man over 70 has 11s. a-week all the year round. He has only himself to keep, and lives with his son-in-law.” I reproduce these instances, because I often had reason to see that they are not exceptional; and they speak to kindly relations between the farmers and the old men in their service—relations one was sorry indeed to see disturbed.

The “lord of the harvest” is the man who, in the

harvest-field, sets the stroke of the work and rules the pace. If he be a fast worker—and he is generally chosen for his strength and quickness—other labourers must follow at the same rate of speed. If he be slow, the work languishes and the harvest is protracted in proportion. As the ingathering of the corn is now very generally done by contract, so much for the job, the men casting in their lot together, it is everybody's interest that the work should be finished quickly. Thus the position of "lord" in the harvest-field, though not one of profit, is a responsible and honourable one. Returning to the Knettishall Farm, I found a solution of the labour difficulty had there been arrived at, which is worth notice, and may be worth imitation. It was this: The farmers complain of Union rules which would allow a strike and leave them at the end of a week without labour. In reply, the Unions express a willingness to modify such rules, so as to protect the farmers against such sudden, arbitrary conduct. But then the irreconcilables among the farmers say they will not treat with the Union executive. Then what is to prevent them from treating with the men individually? A farmer says: "I want so many hands. I am willing to secure to A, B, and C, whom I know as good labourers, certain specified wages for a year or for six months." If these three men are willing to enter into such an engagement, the Union does not appear on the scene at all. There is no need for the intervention of delegates; and farmers who declare they never will be slaves of the Union, need have nothing whatever to do with the Union. This is exactly what Mr Mathew did at Knettishall. One of his labourers, a member of the Union, suited him, and the service suited the labourer. But the farmer said, "I am not going to be

subjected to the caprice of the Lord knows who. If you want to stop with me you must sign an agreement to remain with me for a year; and if so, I will pay you liberally. Perhaps, though, your Union won't let you sign an agreement?" "Oh, won't they, though?" replied the man. "I don't believe they will have anything to say to such a bargain; but if they object to it, let them turn me out of the Union, and welcome!" So the agreement was signed, and here is the substance of it: "J. B. agrees to look after four horses and do the work upon the Knettishall Farm, being paid as under: When working by the day, at the usual wage paid to other able-bodied men upon the farm" (so that he would rise with them in case of an increase in their wages—not, perhaps, a prudent provision); and then follows a list of piece-work prices for ploughing, harrowing, and so on. It was further specified that J. B. should occupy a cottage rent free, and give up possession thereof when he ceased to work for Mr Mathew; that he should have 1s. per week for overtime and Sundays, attendance upon horses and stable-work; and during harvest should receive the same money as was given to other men upon the farm. It was also understood that, though the engagement was for a year, it was terminable on either side upon a two months' notice. In short, the Scotch system of hiring was substantially adopted in this case; and if it were good here, why may it not hold elsewhere? Such an agreement may be enforced summarily under the Master and Servant Act of 1867; and if the question of wages be, in comparison, one of small importance, protection against sudden strikes may be obtained without recognising the Union or going beyond the individual labourer.

I have more than once suggested that yearly hirings should be entered into by individual farmers with trustworthy labourers. Such men would form the farmers' body-guard. They would be much fewer in number than the regular establishment now maintained; and under such a system the farmer would rely more on casual labour than he now does in seasons when extra labour is wanted. Before leaving the subject of J. B.'s hiring, I may add that during the twelve months ending March 1874, he received in money £50, 12s., and occupied (rent free) a cottage containing three bedrooms and two living-rooms, with a large garden. He looked after three horses, worked a double plough, ploughing by the acre, and under his new engagement will not earn less money.

In some cases, during the later stage of the lock-out, the labourers became heartily tired of doing nothing, and bands of them hoed the fields of farmers who had not locked out, working "for love"—and a little beer. Another mode of filling up spare time was less praiseworthy. At nearly every petty sessions in the game districts of Suffolk two or three men were charged with taking partridges' or pheasants' eggs from the preserves or the hedgerows. Sometimes the men went singly, sometimes in pairs; often there was an advance and a rear guard to give the alarm. Many were caught, and fines of 6d. and 1s. an egg inflicted, amounting, with costs, to a good round sum. It was significant that the money was generally paid; and this fact showed either considerable past profits or somebody behind, perhaps a dealer, who was able and willing to pay the fine and costs with an eye to future business. Clearly, also, there must be a market for such produce; and the only people likely to purchase it are the gamekeepers, who wish

to rear as many birds as possible on their masters' estates, and, with that view, ask no questions. As the masters must ultimately pay for the eggs, a nice question of morality and of ultimate cause and effect is raised. I heard of one local dealer who, being asked by a squire in the neighbourhood for some eggs to stock his covers, said, "Are you particular to quality, sir? Would you like some eggs from your own estate, sir?" This is a frankness approaching to impudence. In general, there is greater reserve; but rustic morality is not improved by the consciousness that eggs stolen from estate A will be bought freely by the game-keeper on estate B, while the owner of estate B may possibly adjudicate upon that or some other case of trespass in search of eggs, and may shoot birds hatched on his land from stolen eggs. At Woodbridge I heard one of the delegates deliberately tell his hearers to get as many eggs as they could, but to mind they were not caught—the moral being directed against excessive game preservation.

Sixpence for a pheasant's egg paid very well where a man came upon a nest containing a dozen or more. Indeed, the gains of this pursuit, combined with the nine or ten shillings of Union pay, often put far more money into the labourer's pocket at the end of the week than regular work in the fields. In one of Lord Rendlesham's coverts a gentleman came upon a gang of 40 or 50 labourers. "What are you doing here?" he said. "We're a-getting pheasants' eggs," replied the men, as bold as brass. "Well, but you know as well as I do the pheasants' eggs belong to Lord Rendlesham." "So you say; but we do hear that we have as much right to these here wild animals as anybody else." The gentleman, who was, in fact, Lord Rendlesham's agent, tried to reason with them, but in vain. They

meant to have the eggs, they said, if they could find any ; and all that could be done was to send back a couple of keepers to take the names of such of them as were known. This open defiance was sometimes varied by rough joking. I heard of cases in which a gang of egg-stealers, refusing to leave a field at the keeper's summons, romped about the pheasant's nest he was looking after at the moment, and three or four of them pretended to fall over it. Of course they were at once surrounded by their companions, and, when they got up, the eggs had disappeared ; nor could the keeper tell who had taken them.

Boys who were locked out took an active part in these marauding expeditions, and, of course, snared a hare or rabbit where they could. And one of the worst results of the lock-out was to teach a good many lads in the Suffolk villages to loaf about and get into the mischief which idle hands, as we know, generally find to do. At any time, there is too much inducement to poaching in many parts of the Eastern counties. One village was mentioned to me in East Suffolk as a regular poaching village, with ample stores of nets and snares secreted. The delinquents are very clever in this bad line of business, are seldom caught, and, if they are, never resort to the coarse expedient of violence. Instead of beating or shooting keepers, they fee a lawyer by subscription, and pay the fine by the same co-operative method. It is further supposed that, by a fine of their own levying, which at all events defrays the legal expenses, they punish the awkward blundering offender who has committed the unpardonable sin of being found out.

At Whitsuntide the West Suffolk farmers did not take kindly to the resolution submitted by the executive of the

Defence Association, to the effect that, upon the unconditional withdrawal of the objectionable rules of the labourers' Unions, and upon the return also of the men on strike at Exning and elsewhere at the old rate of wages, the Association should suspend the lock-out, and its members should take back upon the old terms such labourers as they were in need of. Afterwards (June 9), the subject was again discussed at a meeting much more numerous attended, and comprising representatives from kindred associations in Suffolk and the counties of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, North Essex, and Huntingdonshire. Mr Hunter Rodwell, Q.C., presided, and the following new resolution proposed by the executive was unanimously adopted: "That this Association cannot recognise the Unions as at present constituted; and until the time and power of striking are modified, and the course of action now adopted by the Unions discontinued, it must decline the overtures of the independent supporters of the Unions."

In opening the proceedings, the chairman said that Mr Morley, sincere as he doubtless was, and anxious as he was for peace, had been unable to move the delegates, who had rejected the proposal that the men on strike should go back to work on the old terms. The resolution formerly proposed on the part of the West Suffolk Association was therefore now inapplicable, and affairs were not only as bad as they were before, but worse. The delegates were using more inflammatory language than ever; and now, Mr Arch said, it was not a trumpery matter of wages, but a question of principle, and what had hitherto been done by the delegates was but a means to an end—the destruction of the farmers and the landed interest, and giving to

every man five acres of land, or some nonsense of that sort. The matter had now become serious, but the responsibility did not lie on the shoulders of the farmers, who had acted entirely on the defensive ; it rested with the first aggressors. Mr Rodwell proceeded to explain the resolution. It meant that the Association would have nothing whatever to do with delegates, and would decline the overtures of independent supporters of the Union till the striking power was expunged from the Union rules ; till the voice of Mr Arch, Mr Ball, Mr Taylor, and other men, was no more heard to influence the men ; and till the 'Labourers' Chronicle' was suppressed. That was what the Association meant when it said "the course of action" of the Unions must be discontinued. These Unions must become a harmless combination of the men for legitimate and proper objects, and the Association were the proper judges of the modifications which would be requisite in the constitution of the Unions before reopening negotiations with the independent supporters of the Unions. There seemed to be an impression out-of-doors that the farmers of East Anglia had bound themselves not to recognise a labourers' Union in any form, at any time, or under any circumstances. He did not believe such was the farmers' view. A Union for legitimate purposes, such as securing them a fair remuneration, making known their wishes, promoting migration or emigration where there was a surplus of labour, and looking after their cottages, was a Union to which he did not believe there would be any objection. When such a Union existed, the farmers would not, by adopting the resolution, be precluded from opening relations with the men who had so combined ; but while the delegates went about using inflammatory language, no com-

munication would be held with them in any form whatever. He put forward the resolution as a manifesto, expressing the unmitigated hostility of the farmers, not to the principle of a Union, but to the Union as now constituted, and to the language of its representatives. Some farmers might think the resolution less strong than it should be, but he recommended it for adoption as a manifesto which would set the Association right with all reasonable and moderate men and with the public, while at the same time it was not a milk-and-water resolution, but pledged the Association to act with firmness in the crisis in which they were placed. The moneyed people who had hitherto supported the Union would understand that farmers objected, not to the principle of combination among the men, but to the constitution of this Union and the incendiary language by which it was upheld. The labourers would understand that farmers objected, not to their Union, but to a delegates' Union; and he hoped they might satisfy the men that their employers were still well disposed towards them, and that it would be well for them to throw up their false friends and find friends once more in their masters.

The chairman's speech was well received, both on account of the able way in which a delicate and difficult question was handled, and from the authority naturally belonging to a resident landowner and an experienced chairman of Quarter Sessions. It was easy to gather that before the explanations thus given by Mr Rodwell the extreme men among the farmers did not much like the motion, and would have preferred one which pledged the meeting to employ no Union men and recognise no Union whatever at this or any other time. A favourable impression, however, was produced by these explanations, and

by the unequivocal terms in which Mr Rodwell repudiated any relations with mischief-making delegates. His strong appeal in favour of unanimity was well supported by Mr Gayford, a tenant-farmer, who forthwith moved the resolution in a temperate and well-reasoned speech. Indeed I may say here, that if the farmers, in first entering upon this campaign against the Unions, had courted publicity, and taken the same pains to arrange their line of action and support it by efficient speakers, as at Bury on this occasion, they might have produced out-of-doors a very different impression as to the merits of their case. Mr Gayford defended the farmers from the charge of being hard-hearted. Suppose, he asked, they had done what, at the instigation of the delegates, the labourers had done in Suffolk? Suppose they had employed delegates, sent them on market-days into every market-town, and stirred up the farmers everywhere to reduce wages on a given day? He urged his brother farmers not to put themselves in a false position by pledging themselves to oppose any Union, however constituted. Every poor man had a right to join a Union, which was not an unlawful thing, and carry his labour—which was his capital—to the best market. The seconder of the resolution, Mr Manfield, who farms some land of his own near Bury, was equally judicious. He also admitted the moral as well as the legal right of every labourer to join the Union, and the farmers had an equal right to unite for the purpose of resisting pernicious influences and rules under which it would be impossible for them to carry on their business. The Unions were mainly upheld by outside supporters; and giving these gentlemen credit for good motives, Mr Manfield said they had done an incalculable amount of mis-

chief, for they had caused the farmers to take a retrograde step in farming. When, as their neighbours at Newmarket and elsewhere said, they would grow no mangel or swedes, it meant less capital employed in the land, less labour wanted, less produce grown, and higher prices.

It will be seen that the model Union so far depicted would prove what both Mr Gayford and Mr Manfield called it — a very “harmless” Union indeed; the lion would appear with its teeth drawn and claws clipped. The speakers who followed accepted the resolution pretty much on the strength of this interpretation of its meaning. Mr Orford, one of the farmers in the Wilford Hundred whose men struck, contradicted Mr Arch’s statement that the farmers began the attack, and described his own case. He received a notice that 23 of his men required a rise of 1s. a-week in wages, and a reduction of the week’s work to 54 hours; and they struck at the end of the week because he would not agree to these terms. Mr Arch said the two conditions had never been demanded together, and one of the Union rules distinctly provided that there should be no simultaneous demand for higher wages and reduced hours of labour. But his men struck in direct violation of the rule, and were, notwithstanding, supported by the Union while on strike. They said to him, “Will you give us the extra shilling by itself?” He replied, “If your masters, the delegates, afterwards tell you that you must stick to the demand for 54 hours, will you then go out?” They said, “Yes;” upon which he answered, “Then go out now.” Mr Orford said he had proposed at Woodbridge that no Union men should be employed. The reason was, that the Union labourers had declared they would not

work with non-Unionists. If they withdrew this threat he should be able to withdraw his.*

The next speaker was the Marquess of Bristol, who expressed his hearty concurrence with the resolution, and hoped it would be unanimously adopted. Examining certain statements made by Mr Arch in a recent speech, the Marquess expressed his regret at the gross exaggerations which characterised it. Mr Arch talked about the starvation of thousands of honest men. Had one honest man been starved during this dispute? (A voice promptly replied, "No, nor yet a rogue!") Then Mr Arch talked of slavery and serfdom among the labourers, upon which the Marquess said he had heard tenant-farmers complain of the independence of the men; and another voice exclaimed, "It is the farmers who are the slaves!" If an agricultural labourer did not like his employment he could leave it in a week. Perhaps Mr Arch might mean that the married men could not leave so readily; but this was not slavery—it was a bondage common to marriage and paternity, and was to be found in urban as well as in rural life. Mr Arch used strong language upon the enclosure of land,† and said the aristocracy had "stolen" seven

* "My own men who were in the Union," writes an East Suffolk farmer, "although they did not strike, led the non-Union men a dreadful life, and told them, in my presence, that they would drive them off the farm. When I remonstrated, the Unionists asserted that I couldn't help myself, and insinuated very plainly that they were looking forward to the pleasure of driving me off also."

† While vigilant watch should be kept against unjustifiable appropriations of common lands, we must bear in mind the barbarous husbandry which prevailed in what may be called the ante-enclosure period, and the immense field for labour and increased production of food which enclosures alone could have created. In the opening address of Mr Huskinson, President of the Institute of Surveyors for

millions of acres from the people within a certain period. But these enclosures had been based upon Acts of Parliament. The title to such land was as sacred as though it had been bought in the market; and Mr Arch might just as well attack the Duke of Marlborough's title to Blenheim, which was derived from the same statutory authority.

Another speaker, in quite another vein, was Mr Sherwood, of Saxmundham, who explained the reason why he

the session 1874-75, a most interesting description is given of the difficulties under which cultivation was carried on in one parish of 2320 acres, Epperstone, before its enclosure in 1768. It is said to be a typical example of a large number of parishes in the Midland counties. Before enclosure, this was its condition:—

“The village stands near the southern boundary of the parish, surrounded by small homesteads; the meadows by the village stream; the arable fields three in number, in which every owner had one or more plots, in different and distant parts of the parish. The commons for pasturage were distant from the village; and the woodlands, affording pasturage, fuel, and wood for repair, were on the boundary of the village. The allotments in the arable fields did not average half an acre each; and a single farm, neither better nor worse than the rest, contained 70 acres in 146 plots. The arable fields were held in severalty till the crops were carried, and were then subject to common right. The meadows were held in severalty till the hay was cut, and were then open to common right. The common pasture was common all the year. . . . No buildings could be erected on any part of the parish, except in the village homesteads, on account of common right; all the produce had to be carted along unmetalled roads; all the men and horses, in carrying on their daily labour, had to pass great distances to and from the land. No turnips could be grown upon the arable fields for winter food; no artificial grasses for pasturage. It is not too much to say that, if these conditions existed now, a considerable part of the parish would yield very little rent, and others be scarcely worth cultivation. The same parish is now occupied in nine farms in consolidated areas, with houses and premises in central positions, yielding an average rent of 33s. per acre, and a produce at least fourfold greater than it would have done prior to enclosure. . . . I find that in this neighbourhood more than 40,000

had "gone mad" and "locked out" his men. It was because in the Woodbridge district the men had at one and the same time demanded more wages with reduced hours of labour, and refused to work with non-Unionists. The lock-out was only the effect; the strike at Woodbridge and elsewhere was the cause. The farmers did not complain of the men for joining a Union; they only complained of being abused because they did that which a coal-owner

acres were enclosed between 1765 and 1795; the rights of common and usages of culture were in every case the same." Mr Huskinson mentions another case—the enclosure of the commons and commonable lands surrounding the town of Nottingham, where, through persistent opposition, enclosure was delayed for more than half a century. "The common lands, about 1100 acres in extent, surrounding the town, extension of building had become impossible. The pressure of the population was so dense that in parts of the town 500 or 600 persons lived upon an acre of ground. The freemen of Nottingham claimed the right of pasturage during portions of the year, and the landowners held considerable portions in severalty for the rest of the year. The freemen were a numerous body, and, being voters, exercised considerable influence at elections. It was their firm conviction that their interests would be injured by enclosure. . . . The value of the freemen's right of pasturage was not worth more than £150 a-year; and the land itself, while subject to those rights, was not worth to the landowners more than £100 per acre." At length the landowners succeeded in passing an Enclosure Bill, and in 1851 the allotments were made free from all common rights. "The result, after twenty-three years, is, that a large proportion of the land has been covered with houses and manufactories. The land, before enclosure worth only £100 per acre, has been sold by the yard at prices varying from 2s. to £1, and probably averaging 6s. per yard. The freemen, whose income from the pasturage was not worth more than £150 a-year, had an estate allotted them after enclosure which now produces £3700 a-year; and as great part of this is from leasehold-ground rents, it will, in future, be much greater. The town of Nottingham received allotments for an arboretum, for public walks, recreation and cricket grounds, of over 100 acres; and the general benefit to the town in health and wealth is hardly calculable."

or an iron-manufacturer would be thought amply justified in doing. He urged his brother farmers never to surrender upon terms which would compel them at no distant day to fight the battle over again. The meeting was also addressed by Mr Slater, of Cheveley, chairman of the Newmarket Defence Association, who approved the resolution, after hearing the explanations of the chairman, though the Newmarket committee thought it was not strong enough. Other representatives of district associations also spoke. Letters expressing cordial approval of the resolution were read from the Rev. E. R. Benyon, Colonel Wilson, Captain Bence, and other large landowners, and from representatives of neighbouring Defence Associations.

The Norfolk farmers, during 1873-74, were not quite free from difficulties about labour. Some of the men gave notice that they should require a rise of a shilling in wages, and there was a strike upon the farms of Mr C. S. Read, M.P., and Mr Leamon, among other employers. A few labourers migrated to the north, but the majority soon returned, and the old story was repeated here; they came back with minds cleared of a good many false notions about what was to be done or gained outside their own villages, and, as one farmer said to me, they were worth 2s. or 3s. more a-week to him than they were before.* "Seeing the world," as it may be seen in any large manufacturing town, appeared indeed to be, as it often is elsewhere, an excellent discipline and corrective. The East Anglian labourer, as a rule, does not take kindly either to the severe toil or

* "Since the harvest of 1873," writes an Essex farmer, "we have had no trouble with our men. They have never been more docile or anxious to give satisfaction. The leaven of Unionism appears to be eradicated."

the rough language and ways of the northern workman. His is a softer, gentler nature ; and for this reason, in many cases, he found the new companionship into which he was suddenly thrust quite uncongenial, while a new experience dawned upon him—that higher wages do not necessarily mean a change for the better. Such instances occurred in Norfolk, though less commonly than in the sister county, because the scale of rates was higher, and the inducement, therefore, was greater to leave well alone. The bulk of the Norfolk farmers, in June 1874, were paying 15s. a-week nominal wages ; and I was assured by several farmers that the earnings of their ordinary labourers, including hay-making, harvest, and piece-work at other seasons, averaged £1 a-week all the year round ; while the *maximum* rent for a comfortable cottage, with 20 rods of garden or allotment, is £4 10s. a-year. As to piece-work, increased day-wages made the men less eager for it than they used to be. They were satisfied to earn 15s. a-week in the ordinary jog-trot way ; or it may be that the rates fixed for what they call “taking work” had not, in their opinion, risen proportionately with the rise in day-wages, and were not therefore sufficient to tempt them to extra exertion. That the labourers were better off than they had been for a long time past—perhaps even than they had ever been before—the farmers strenuously declared. Hundreds of the men around Norwich came to see the County Agricultural Show held there in June, sacrificing a day or half a day in doing so ; and some of them paid 3s. for the dinner or luncheon which was provided for the visitors. In some cases the farmers sent them in waggons, and many employers used in former years to pay the men’s expenses into the bargain. “No more of that for me, thank you !” said one farmer. “If he wants

to see the show, Mr Unionist must pay for himself and get there as he can." For that matter, it is better that both Unionists and non-Unionists should pay for themselves, and feel, in this and in other things, that they can now enjoy the unaccustomed luxury of independence.

Altogether, it will be gathered that the Union labourers in Norfolk had less reason for striking than their comrades in Suffolk, where the general rate of wages was 13s. instead of 15s. The exceptional troubles, however, which arose with the men in Lincolnshire, and the example of still greater troubles borne by their southern neighbours, induced the Norfolk farmers to found an Association, the objects of which were "to defend the interests of the occupiers of the soil against the oppression of the Agricultural Labourers' Union, or any other combination of a similar nature, and to preserve the principle of freedom of contract between employer and employed; and generally to act together in all matters relating to labour; to protect against threats or intimidation those agricultural labourers who are not members of any Union or other combination which attempts to dictate arbitrary terms to employers, as well as those labourers who, being members of a Union, may desire to withdraw from it; to compensate the members for loss sustained in resisting the coercive demands of the Agricultural Labourers' Union or other similar combination." The entrance-fee was 2s. 6d. for every 50 acres in a member's occupation; besides which, members are liable to calls of 1d. in the pound upon their poor-rate assessment. Each poor-law Union in the county is made a district for the purposes of the Association, with a district committee sending a delegate to the central committee. According to the rules adopted by the interim executive, each district committee

was empowered to fix the *maximum* rate of wages within its own district ; and if a strike of Union men occurred, the case was to be reported to the central committee, who were authorised " to order all members of the Association within the district to lock out from their employ all Union men for such period as the central committee shall think necessary." It was felt, on more mature consideration, that these two rules were hardly such as would be justified by public opinion. Some members who took a moderate and conciliatory view of the question did not wish to see either the district committee authorised to fix the *maximum* rate of wages, or the central executive authorised to order a lock-out. At the first general meeting of members, held at Norwich, June 20, these objections were considered, and the rules were modified accordingly. Thus all mention of a lock-out disappeared from the rules, though, of course, it will be in the power of the general body of members to bring about a lock-out if they think the provocation grave enough to warrant one.

About 500 farmers were present at the meeting. Lord Walsingham, president of the Association, acting as chairman, recommended a spirit of forbearance, showing no antagonism towards the Unions which had been formed, while the farmers stood firm in their own defence.

Agricultural Unions (he said) existed, not by virtue of the contributions of the labourers, but through external sympathy and support ; failing which, they would long since have collapsed. This support would continue so long as the public believed that farmers denied the right of the men to combine. Now, as reasonable men, the farmers could not deny this right of combination ; and if a proper tone on this point had in the first instance been taken by the farmers in the

Eastern counties, it was not improbable that all disagreement might have been prevented, as it had in the locality with which he was more immediately connected, and the men might have been convinced that their own interests were not served by joining such a combination. Probably in some cases there had been faults on both sides. The farmers had lost opportunities of meeting reasonable requests by their labourers; but now he earnestly hoped that those whom he addressed would try to avoid all suspicion of neglect or ill-feeling towards the men upon whom the prosperity of English agriculture mainly depended. He had said the farmers were bound to admit the men's right to combine, as well as their right to choose their own advocates and appoint their own arbitrators; but he also asserted the right of employers to decline to meet such advocates and reject such arbitration. It was as ridiculous that disputes between farmers and labourers should be settled by Mr Morley or Mr Dixon, as it would be if any farmers in the room interposed between the Manchester cotton-spinners and their "hands" to decide upon the hours of labour. We are not met (Lord Walsingham continued) to talk of stamping out the Union. Whether the Union, as some believe, will die a natural death, or whether it will live on, it is now an established fact. It exists, and we must recognise it. But it exists as a nuisance, creating false hopes, making false promises, arousing discontent, and exciting ill-will between class and class. If now, declining to meet the delegates, we confine ourselves to the formation of a strong Defence Association, the labourers may in time find out their mistake, and return to employers who are far better able to help them, and far more honestly disposed to help them, than any of the people in whom they unfortunately trust at present.

The speech was a good deal applauded, and Mr Leamon then proposed the modification of the rules. He thought there would have been a strike in Norfolk but for the liberal wages which were given there; and a well-paid labourer was worth more than an ill-paid one. As to the "strikes" and "lock-out" which had occurred elsewhere, if the men could vote by ballot, a very large majority of them would be for giving up the Union and returning to work. Mr Hardy, a tenant-farmer, seconded the proposal in an excellent speech. Mr Gayford said the Norfolk farmers had reason to be thankful to their brother farmers in other counties who had borne the burden of this struggle with the Union. The Norfolk farmers had thereby learnt the necessity of conciliation, while at the same time the funds of the Unions had been absorbed in carrying on the fight in other counties, and a strike had thus probably been averted in Norfolk. Mr C. S. Read, M.P., said the Association meant conciliation rather than defiance to the labourers. At the same time, he too was thankful to those who elsewhere had fought the battle of the farmers. The Suffolk farmers were not simply protesting against a combination of the labourers for the purpose of bettering their condition, but against the efforts of leaders of a semi-political organisation, who, if they had their will, would carry on this agitation so that the farmers could not carry on their business. He believed also that the Suffolk farmers were fighting against an organisation which, if carried out in its entirety, would prove as tyrannical, as secret, and as tormenting as the Star Chamber of old.

When "haysel"—the good old local word—began in the Eastern counties, there was no such scarcity of labour as to cause inconvenience. In some cases, fearing a

want of hands, the farmers fed off with stock grass which would otherwise have been cut and stacked in due season. This precaution reduced the demand for men; and then the mowing-machine became a true farmer's friend at this emergency, for it enabled him to dispense with much manual labour, and that precisely the skilled labour which was the hardest to replace. When the grass can be cut down by a machine and one or two horses with a rapidity which leaves the mowers and their scythes far behind, the farmer feels like the master of new battalions. He has a new power at his back. Unskilled labour in the hay-field may easily be got. It is what "hopping" is in Kent—a recreation, a source of health and enjoyment to many people pent up for the rest of the year in close rooms or workshops. Here is one practical illustration. An East Suffolk farmer, whose men had not joined the Union, was paying them as usual one Friday night, just before haying began, when something like the following conversation occurred:—Men: "We hear as how you're a-going to have your stover (artificial grass) cut by that there machine, sir." Farmer: "Yes, that is so." Men: "Then, sir, what we have to say is, we don't mean to work with that there machine." And they did not. Their notion was, that if the machine cut the stover, it might cart the stover, mowing by the acre being a source of extra profit now closed to them. The Union secretary of the village, who was sitting on a stile close by the farmer's barns, and, as the farmer would think, acting the Mephistopheles to these rustic Faustus, at once enrolled some fresh recruits. But their places were soon taken in the fields they had left. The news spread, and without any solicitation whatever, twenty-seven hands from the neighbouring village came into the

hay-field when the work began. Forges were closed, and four blacksmiths came to the rescue ; three bricklayers laid down trowel and mortar ; two small veterinary doctors ignored for a time the diseases of cattle ; the carpenter and the wheelwright took up the hay-fork ; and the village carrier not only came himself, but brought in his cart seven people eager to scent and handle the new-mown hay. "Yes, and they worked with a will," said the farmer ; "for depend upon it, the artisan as a rule works half as hard again as the farm labourer, who, three parts of his time, does not know what real work is." Anyhow, the farmer had more labour than he wanted, but made it a point of honour to find employment for all these volunteers. In some instances they were anxious to engage in advance for harvest-work, and engagements were made accordingly. The locked-out labourers were disappointed and depressed, fearing, with good reason, that the harvest would by-and-by be gathered in with not much greater difficulty ; that the reaping-machine then would replace skilled labour, just as the mowing-machine had replaced it at haysel ; and that the villages or small towns would supply unskilled labourers, glad of the chance of earning high wages and passing three weeks or a month in the pure air. From the first, the exceptional dryness of the season was against the locked-out men, because much of the usual farm-work thereby became unnecessary. But they had counted confidently on haysel for showing that they were indispensable ; and as to the ingathering of the corn, had not the farmers' necessity at harvest-time always been the labourers' opportunity ? — a fact recognised by unusually high wages in that season.

CHAPTER V.

LABOURERS' "PILGRIMAGE"—START FROM NEWMARKET—CAMBRIDGE
 —RECEPTION AT SHEFFIELD—SPEECH BY MR ARCH—FALL IN PRICE
 OF STOCK—LOSSES OF FARMERS—EAST ANGLIAN FARMERS' ASSOCI-
 ATION—BEGINNING OF HARVEST—DISAPPOINTMENT OF LOCKED-OUT
 LABOURERS—CROPS IN EAST SUFFOLK—DIFFICULTIES IN FARMING
 LIGHT LAND IN DRY SEASONS—RETURNED "PILGRIMS"—END OF
 THE STRUGGLE—UNION ALLOWANCES STOPPED—THE OLD MEN—
 EMIGRATION—SPEECH BY MR H. TAYLOR—HIS DEFENCE OF LA-
 BOURERS' UNIONS—DELUSIONS AMONG THE LABOURERS—STATE-
 MENT BY COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL UNION—THE MEN SETTLE
 DOWN TO WORK—ALLEGED UNDERSTOCKING OF FARMS.

WHAT was called "a pilgrimage" of labourers began on June 30. The locked-out men in the Newmarket district met at Newmarket, to the number of some hundreds, on their usual gathering ground, The Severals. A selection of pilgrims had previously been made from among them by the committees of the various branches, each branch sending representatives; and these men and their companions were addressed by Mr Henry Taylor, the general secretary of the National Labourers' Union, who undertook to lead the men from the Eastern counties, by easy stages, to the large towns in the manufacturing districts, with a view to elicit renewed sympathy and support, there and on the way, from Trade-Unionists and the public. There was a keen competition among the men for the privilege of join-

ing this curious expedition. They were quite tired of their fourteen weeks' enforced idleness, and any change from the listless do-nothing life they had lately led was welcome. Some of those chosen were elderly, worn-looking men, who looked by no means able to endure the hardships of rough walking in all weathers. They were fairly told by Mr Taylor of the difficulties of the long tramp they were beginning, and such of them as thought they would be unequal to it were urged to go back. None flinched, however; and, amid great cheering from the men left behind and some sobbing from the women, the pilgrimage began. Some bore banners at starting, but these were furled when the one long street of which Newmarket chiefly boasts was left behind. A light waggon bore the flags when these were not wanted for display, and also carried what little baggage the labourers brought with them. The first stage reached was Cambridge. Here, on entering the town, each of the labourers seemed to have an appointed duty. Some carried small baskets, in which they received pence or other contributions; others sold broadsheets of Union songs: some were told off to sing, and walked in ranks to such tunes as they could from time to time raise; others, again, marshalled the procession, or sold copies of the Union newspaper. And so this quaint array of some sixty or seventy English peasants, in velveteens, smocks, or other working dress, with Union blue ribbons prominently displayed, proceeded to the inn at which a dinner had been prepared for them. To judge by their looks, they were in need of a substantial meal. Many of them had walked seven or eight miles from their respective villages before they reached Newmarket, and then they trudged some fifteen miles to Cambridge. The agricultural labourer is

not usually a good walker, and though the waggon helped the tired ones, all were evidently glad to reach the end of the first day's march. The day's work was not yet ended, though. When the plain fare set before them had been consumed, the men again formed in procession, and were led on to the Common, where a meeting was organised and speeches were delivered. Before the proceedings ended, some 2000 people had assembled. Mr Taylor was the chief speaker, and declared that there had been a conspiracy among the farmers, aided by landowners like Lord Bristol, to keep the labourers from the work they were ready and able to perform. Now he should condemn such conduct if the labourers were guilty of it, just as he now blamed employers for such villanous doings. People said if it were not for the delegates and the Union paper, employers would treat with the men. In other words, if the men would allow their hands to be tied, the employers would then be ready to fight them. Now it was impossible for labourers to deal single-handed with employers; if they did so, and dared to ask for a rise of wages, they were often dismissed. As the farmers, when they formed their associations, were compelled to employ paid secretaries and agents, he did not see why ignorant men like the agricultural labourers should not be free to do the same; but he was willing to remove even this stumbling-block about the delegates, and let the men treat directly with the farmers, for he believed they were just as intelligent as the farmers. But then Lord Bristol and others denounced this as a political agitation. Now, why did the men interest themselves in politics? Because the conviction was forced upon them that this was the only method of insuring respect and attention to their just rights. The

men were now driven to demand political rights, and the first thing they claimed was the franchise. Mr Taylor then described the object of this march from the Eastern counties, which, he said, was to inform the country of the farm labourers' case and actual condition, and appeal to all classes of the community whether these men alone were to be denied the legal and moral right of combination.

When the general secretary had finished his address, two or three farm labourers took up the tale. One of the speakers, who said he was an Oxfordshire labourer, attributed the labourers' degradation chiefly to ignorance, and remarked that, in proportion as his class became more intelligent, sober, and industrious, they would refuse to be tied down to 14s. or 16s. a-week. The men and their families were badly fed, badly clothed and housed—in many cases worse than the cattle in the fields. He stated, as the result of statistics communicated to him, that, by reason of excessive toil, working men only attained half the age of non-workers, who lived to an average age of 45, while the average reached by the working population was only 22 ;* and he added, that in the Southern and Midland counties, with the latter of which he was best acquainted, there were whole rows of cottages in which agricultural labourers, with their families, had but one bedroom. Some good advice was given to the farm labourers by a Cambridge artisan named Flatters, who was once a farm labourer himself. He said plainly that to give the franchise to many men of that class was like giving a sharp

* "One difficulty which perplexed our County Benefit Society," writes a Suffolk correspondent, "was that the Suffolk agricultural labourer is so long-lived that to give him a pension in old age becomes a very expensive matter indeed."

knife to a child ; and he strongly advised them, if they got an increase of wages, not to spend the money at the public-house, but in providing more home comforts and in educating their children. He said he had never been a Unionist, feeling able to fight his own battles ; but he was indignant with the farmers for practically refusing to their men, as they did, the right of combining. He hoped that one day farmers and men would again be as one, and that the kindly greeting which passed between Boaz and the reapers—"The Lord be with you, and may the Lord bless you"—might one day pass between masters and labourers in English harvest-fields. Taking the Bible from his pocket, Mr Flatters read this verse ; and the sentiment and his way of introducing it were loudly applauded. The secretary of the Union in this district said that 360 Cambridgeshire men were locked out here, not because they had asked for a rise of wages, but because they were Union men, and because in the adjoining county some other Union men had ventured to ask for such an increase. The labourers in his district had spoken to him only a fortnight before they were locked out in praise of their employers, who, they said, had behaved splendidly all through the winter in keeping them on and in paying them for broken days. In consequence, they said they would not ask for any rise, but would let it come from their masters. Yet a fortnight afterwards they were locked out, though they had spoken not a word about higher wages. This was a specimen of the good feeling shown by the farmers, of which so much was said. The meeting was very orderly ; at the close and throughout it the pilgrims were busy in soliciting subscriptions, and money seemed to come in pretty freely, though in small coin.

Next morning, after a substantial breakfast and a little beer, the men started for Bedford; but as the journey is one of 28 or 30 miles, too long to be made wholly on foot, it was made, like some other modern pilgrimages, partly by rail. In Cambridge, about £25 were collected, £12 of which consisted of pence and halfpence. This sum included the proceeds of sales of copies of Union songs and the Union paper. It was reckoned a pretty good amount for the first day's start. Among the larger towns the men visited were Nottingham, Sheffield, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, and Coventry, where they received substantial help; * but, looked at any way, this begging expedition by stalwart fellows who should have been at work was a sorry business.

I visited Sheffield when the "pilgrims" arrived there. It was expected that this town, the centre of Trade-Unionism, would give a hearty reception to the newest Trade-Union recruits, and the expectation was fully borne out. The agricultural "pilgrims," some 60 in number, went by train to Heeley, in the outskirts of Sheffield. They had no cause to complain of Yorkshire hospitality. Upon their arrival they were at once regaled at the expense of the Sheffield Trades Council, and then the procession began. As usual, besides the banners, a considerable number of the men carried money-boxes and solicited contributions as they passed along. Throughout the whole route, which was densely thronged, their appeal met with a free response from the well-paid artisans employed in the staple trades of Sheffield; and when they left the town (July 16), after two days' sojourn, they had received

* The sum of £700 was cleared during the "pilgrimage," after paying all expenses.

£140, mainly contributed by working men. At Nottingham, from which town they last came, one day's appeal produced £100. The appearance of the labourers was certainly not such as to create sympathy. Their broad shoulders and fresh faces presented a favourable contrast to the pale-faced, under-sized men by whom they were welcomed and relieved. One of the farm labourers felt it necessary to apologise to the Sheffield people for being so hearty, and accounted for the fact by saying that during the last fortnight he had eaten more beef than he had eaten all the rest of his life, though he was 46 years old.

Mr Arch spoke twice at Sheffield. In Paradise Square, where outdoor political meetings are held, some 7000 or 8000 persons assembled to hear him. He denied the statement of the Marquess of Salisbury that during the last 25 years the wages of the agricultural labourers had increased more than those of any other class of workmen; and as a precedent and a justification for union among men of his class, he instanced the strike and union among the nobles, who were headed by Archbishop Langton, and by their Union obtained Magna Charta. As one means of enlisting the sympathy of the town population, Mr Arch dwelt upon the bad cultivation of the land, which might, he said, produce double the quantity of food it now produced, and then the artisans of Sheffield and other towns would pay 30 or 40 per cent less for their food. The enclosure of waste lands by Bills passed through landlord influence was another of his themes. He then caused great excitement in the meeting by telling this cock-and-bull story: "A certain gentleman," he said, "who stands very close to the Crown," told a friend of his in London,

"I should not mind going and shooting these labourers down like I shot the Indians." There were here indignant cries of "Down with him!" and somebody in the crowd called out, "We'll get Mary Ann to him!"—Mary Ann being the Sheffield name for the mysterious Trade-Union "rattener," who cuts or steals wheel-bands, who used to explode canisters or bottles of powder in the workshops or houses of "knobsticks," and in the interests of Trade-Unions resorts to other acts of violence, with which the name of Broadhead will always be connected in local annals. Mr Arch, gathering excitement from the excitement he had occasioned, went on to say that he had hitherto done his utmost in counselling the labourers to be moderate and refrain from all violence; but if insults like this were added to injury, the labourers would show they had English blood in their veins, and could fight at home as well as they had heretofore fought in their country's cause abroad. At this mischievous nonsense there was a fresh demonstration, and the dense mass of people seemed to believe for the moment that some eminent person had really expressed a desire to shoot down the labourers. Then Mr Arch told the meeting how he had lectured a member of Parliament who had excused himself to him for not bringing questions affecting the agricultural labourers before the notice of Parliament. "Members have a great difficulty in bringing forward such questions, and meet with much opposition." This is what the popular representative said apologetically. Mr Arch replied sternly, "Sir, if you wish to do your duty to your constituents and your country, you must not be put down! If I were inside St Stephen's, I would raise the question of waste land if all the members were down upon me like

vultures." He denounced a system under which thousands of acres of land, instead of being cultivated in the interest of the many, were overrun with game for the sport of the few. Communism or no communism, his doctrine was that the produce of the earth should be for the inhabitants thereof, according to the writing of old—"The earth hath He given to the children of men."

All this time the price of sheep and bullocks was falling so steadily that many large light-land farmers in the Eastern counties told me they should lose from £1000 to £2000 upon the year's operations. "I have now 600 fat sheep to sell," wrote one farmer, "and they are not worth so much as I gave for them last year by several shillings apiece, in spite of what their feed has cost me meanwhile." The same complaint reached me from all sides. I heard of one heavily-stocked farm in Norfolk, taken in 1873 when stock was high, on which it was estimated that the farmer was £3000 to the bad at the reduced prices of 1874. This may be taken as one out of many instances of farming difficulties. A Suffolk farmer told me that, before engaging the harvest men, he called them together for a little friendly palaver. "My friends," he said, "I wish to offer you a fair harvest wage, but in doing so it is right you should know that farmers are losing a great deal of money this year, owing to the downward tendency of the markets. I myself shall lose £1500 at least." Here a labourer, who had been a Unionist, interrupted him at once. "That ain't our business, sir," he called out; "that's your business: what you lost ain't nothing to us." It was a rough reminder that the day of paternal, perhaps even of friendly or cordial relations, had passed away during this six months' struggle; and as the man had been forced into

leaving his Union, it was not surprising that when the farmer invited sympathy he was met with what he no doubt thought brutal frankness. "Before the days of the Union," said the farmer, pathetically, "a man would have told me he was sorry the farm was not paying. Now, however, the Union has made him 'independent,' and 'it ain't nothing to him.'" This was not the farmer's reply to the unfeeling labourer; it was less sentimental and more practical. "My friend," he remarked, with some bitterness, "I should have thought your Union, in educating and elevating you, would have taught you that, when farming pays badly, the farmer employs no more men and pays no higher wages than he can help. At any rate, you will find that if wheat and stock are cheap next year wages will go down, and not all the Unions in the world will keep them up."

At Bury St Edmunds, July 11, 1874, it was resolved to form an "East Anglian Farmers' Central Board of Consultation," and representatives from all or nearly all the Defence Associations of East Anglia were present. There is no doubt, therefore, that the members of those Associations throughout the five counties of Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, and Essex, will henceforth be prepared to act in unison in the event of any fresh difficulty about labour. The Board will consist of delegates, or, if that be a word distasteful to the farmers, of representatives from the Defence Associations which have been formed in these counties. Two members from each local association will be deputed to attend each meeting of the Central Board, the object of which is "to discuss and advise on all questions affecting the interests of such associations without prejudice to the independent action of each, but with a view to secure one uniform

course of policy so far as practicable." Mr Hunter Rodwell, now M.P. for Cambridgeshire, presides over the new board. Among other members of the West Suffolk Association present at the meeting were the Marquess of Bristol, the vice-chairman (Mr H. Stanley), Mr Walton Burrell, Mr George Gayford, Mr W. Hervey (Timworth), and Mr W. N. King. Mr Martin Slater represented the Newmarket Association, whose members earned such goodwill among the farmers by their determined stand against the labourers' Union, that I have heard Norfolk farmers express their anxiety to have photographs of the whole Association, from the chairman downwards. The neighbouring Defence Associations were represented as follows : The Norfolk Association by Mr T. J. Gayford (Hargham), the Isle of Ely Association by Mr Charles Mainprice and Mr William Pate (Ely), the Huntingdon Association by Mr R. Attenborough (Sawtry) and Mr C. P. Tebbutt (Huntingdon), the Essex and Suffolk Association by Mr J. S. Gardiner, the Colchester and East Essex Association by Mr Richardson, the Saffron Walden Association by Mr John Burrell (Littlebury), the Wilford Hundred Association by Mr W. Johnson (Hacheston), and the Saxmundham District by Mr J. Sherwood (Leiston). As yet no National Association has been formed which possesses the confidence of the farmers generally. It was suggested that the example of the labourers should be followed in this respect, but the objection was taken that, as the system of farming differs so widely in different counties, combination ought for the present to be limited to districts where the system of farming is practically the same. If, however, the example of East Anglia be followed in other parts of the kingdom, it is clear that there must be communication and concert

between the various boards before the farmers' organisation can be deemed complete.

Harvest began in some parts of the Eastern counties in the third week of July, and the farmers at once found that they had as many hands as they required without employing Unionists, who therefore remained idle. The time had come when they were led to believe that their old masters would be forced to take them back; and they saw the harvest ripe and being gathered in by strangers. Only those who know the reliance placed by agricultural labourers upon the harvest-money can know how severe a blow this was to the Union hands. The price paid by the farmers for the harvest to adult labourers around Newmarket was from £10 up to £11, 10s.; and the men would earn on an average not less than £2, 10s. a-week, by no very hard work either, since the machine-reaper and elevator came into use. High wages seemed to bring plenty of people ready to earn them. Several hundreds of sturdy coprolite-diggers were set free from the pits, and hired themselves to the farmers. To such men harvest-work is almost play in comparison with their usual toil, which is like that of a "navvy." In the Newmarket district there were no Irish immigrants, though some were engaged in the Isle of Ely. A hundred or so of men were ready to come from Wiltshire, but were told that they would not be wanted. In a recent speech, Lord Waveney said that, even if the farmers could tide over harvest, they must have abundant labour to clean, manure, and crop the land directly afterwards. There is certainly no more important time throughout the year for tillage than the few weeks which follow harvest; but none of the farmers expressed any doubt of being able to surmount this difficulty

also. Some during harvest employed the wives and elder children of the labourers who remained with them, and who in this way earned a good deal of money. One family was mentioned to me whose united earnings during the harvest were over £20. The reaping-machines enabled the farmers to utilise female as well as unskilled male labour in the harvest-field.

In some instances the locked-out men obtained harvest-work from the smaller farmers who were not members of the Defence Associations; but few of them were able to get a harvest on any terms. One farmer wrote that the labourers were leaving the neighbourhood or leaving the Union by wholesale; "and if the Union leaders could hear the language used about them by the men, they would learn for the first time how evanescent a thing popularity is." My informant added, that farming in his district had not suffered from the lock-out. "The steam-plough will do even more for us after harvest—the time about which Lord Waveney is anxious—than the mower and reaper have done for haysel and harvest. On the larger farms most of the wheat-stubbles will this year be broken up by steam."

Though the wheat-yield in the Eastern counties was above the average, grievous complaints were made by the occupiers of light land. It often happens, I believe, that on light land, farms which are the best cultivated and the most highly manured suffer most from drought. The farmers say that in a dry season the more some lands are manured the more they burn. "Such facts as these," a farmer remarked, "are quite overlooked by Mr Arch when he talks to the townspeople about half-cultivated land. In a light-land district like ours, the farmer's life is one continual struggle against difficulties and disappointments.

None but men of capital can stand against the vicissitudes of light land and stock-farming. But Bradford, Leeds, and Manchester know nothing of these chances and losses, and therefore Mr Arch's nonsense goes down." The story of the losses and crosses of the light-land farmers was, indeed, often grievous. Their corn was thin and poor. Their root-crops were a failure through prolonged drought. They had no feed for their sheep and stock, and had to sell it off at such prices as it would fetch. Lambs were selling at 25s., which in 1873 were worth 45s. ; and scores upon scores of lambs which had become weakly through want of keep, but might easily be made strong and fat by hand-feeding, were hawked by drovers through the streets of the market-towns, and sold singly or otherwise as "pets," or for slaughter, at prices ranging from 2s. 6d. upwards.

In the Newmarket district I found some labourers who had tired of the pilgrimage and returned home. They spoke with enthusiasm about the heartiness of their welcome in the midland and northern counties, and tender recollections still haunted them of the beef and beer with which they had been regaled. "How is it you left such comfortable quarters, then?" I asked. They had not heard news from home, they replied, and as they travelled from place to place so rapidly, could get no letters. This was a sentimental reason which showed the strength of home ties, and so far was creditable. Still, the plea did not strike me as quite satisfactory, and after a little while another and perhaps stronger reason came out. "The fact is, we got tired of 'cadging' about. It was all very well coming into a big place and being cheered by the workpeople. But now suppose, sir, you had to hold out a money-box for coppers, and suppose, every now and then,

somebody said to you, 'Why don't you go back and work, you lazy beggars?'—would you like it, now?" I confessed that I should not like it at all, and admitted that this reason for returning was perfectly valid.

The struggle came to an end in July, as soon as it was found that the farmers could get their corn harvested without aid from their locked-out labourers. At a meeting of a sub-committee of the executive committee of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union, held at Leamington, July 27, the following resolution was adopted: "That in the face of the harsh and prolonged lock-out in the Eastern counties, this committee cannot feel justified in supporting the labourers in enforced idleness indefinitely, nor can they seek the public support continually while the harvest is waiting to be gathered. The committee therefore resolve to place migration and emigration at the disposal of the labourers, or the alternative of depending wholly on their own resources." The Federal Union leaders in London were not long in following the example set at Leamington. The London committee agreed to a resolution, on July 28, recommending that the lock-out be declared at an end; and on July 29 the executive council resolved,—“That, considering the large number of men who have returned to work without giving up their Union cards, the executive council of the Federal Labourers' Union feels itself in a position to declare that the time has now arrived for closing the lock-out in the Eastern counties in connection with the Federation. That this council, while returning its grateful thanks to the public and the trade societies, both of London and the provinces, for their generous aid in support of the locked-out men, earnestly hope that their contributions will be continued

for a few weeks longer, in order that all arrears of lock-out pay may be duly paid, and to provide for those men who may be made victims through the dispute." The old men, who joined the Union with such little forethought, were left to their fate, for the National executive did not hold themselves bound to relieve the poor-rates by making any provision for them.* I often had to lament the obvious, inevitable fate of the older labourers, who set themselves in the front of the battle. It is of no use to take more than half-worn-out labourers to other labour markets. Their strength is gone; they can offer no service worth buying in the open market; and it is both useless and cruel to transplant them elsewhere. But they are still worth something for odd jobs at home. Would the farmers be merciful to these old servants, and take them back again where it was possible to do so? In their ignorance, many of them supposed they were going to be provided for permanently in old age by the Union. I am glad to add that most of the farmers of whom I heard did take a merciful view of the conduct of the old men, and, passing lightly over their brief rebellion, remembered only their long and faith-

* On August 3, the executive committee of the National Labourers' Union passed the following resolutions: "This committee confirms the resolution of the sub-committee of July 27, in reference to the locked-out labourers, and are of opinion that one week's clear notice should be given to each locked-out member before withdrawing their support. This committee, therefore, decides to pay one week more to locked-out men not in employment. This committee do not feel justified, or in any way bound, to give permanent relief to such men, who, by reason of age or infirmity, are unable to migrate, but who are victimised by the farmers in being discharged. This committee does not feel justified in taking upon itself the duties and responsibilities of the Poor-Law Board."

ful service in the past, and that their strength had been expended, sometimes for the benefit of three generations of employers.

Considerable numbers of the labourers had by this time been drafted off as emigrants, or for work in other parts of England, and during harvest some found employment upon small farms near home. The result was, that when these resolutions were passed not more than about 800 locked-out men were on the books of the National Union for relief in the Suffolk district, out of nearly 2000 who were at one time so supported. The Union executive assumed that a considerable proportion of these men were idle, shiftless, and wanting in energy and proper independence—men whom it would be wrong to maintain any longer in idleness at the expense of sympathisers with the Union, or of the paying members of the Union, when the alternative of work was offered to them elsewhere. The farmers would often be most thankful to the Union executive for getting rid of such men. I have frequently heard farmers express their willingness to subscribe liberally towards the emigration of fellows like these, and bless the Union which would rid the parish of them. Whether the colonies are also grateful for this class of labour is doubtful. Experienced emigration agents agree in the opinion that, as a rule, emigrants who go reluctantly and half-heartedly make indifferent colonists; that far better than assisted emigrants are the men who make up their minds to go from confidence in their own energy and industry, and who rely wholly upon their own resources.

The Union leaders did not admit any defeat. They maintained that Unionism would still be strong in Suffolk, where, in July 1874, there were 71 branches, with 5500

paying members, whose contributions, according to the last balance-sheet, amounted to £630 in the quarter ending July 6. One fact established by the lock-out was the existence of a large amount of surplus labour in the Eastern counties. Another was the power of the farmers to dispense with much of the labour usually employed by them. The Union did good service in drafting off a large portion of this redundant labour to other markets. Before the lock-out occurred, about 800 men, many of them heads of families, were removed from the Suffolk district by the agency of the Union. One has no means of knowing what proportion of these men returned to their old homes, dissatisfied with the work provided for them, or else preferring their old mode of life, even with lower wages. But the farmers, as a body, never denied that in thus removing labour from places where it was in excess the Union did good service to the labourers, and adopted legitimate means for securing a rise in the price of labour.

At Woodbridge, July 30, Mr Taylor, secretary of the National Union, met the labourers in the market-place, and defended the course taken by the Union leaders. He admitted that the men had much to learn before they could master the principles of union or derive the full benefit of union. But the farmers also had much to learn on the same subject. The labourers had hoped for too much, the farmers had feared too much, from the Union. In all reforms, social and political, men deceived themselves in the same way; but the Union had really done more for the men than they could have reasonably expected. It was said that the men did not study their masters' interests. He allowed that thousands of working men did not do so. What was the reason? Because at present they had no motive for

doing so. If there was more interchange of thought and feeling between employers and employed, one class would educate the other, and the labourer would never be inconsiderate, because he would know that his interests were identical with those of the employer. The masters would then know that low wages meant both moral, mental, and physical degradation—a state in which the labourer, if he had the will, had not the stamina to give a good day's work. The Union leaders had been charged with being inconsiderate, and with dictating terms. He strenuously denied both assertions. From the first moment of the dispute, and even before it occurred, they had invited the employers to meet the men, and if there was a wrong, to set it right together. But they had been abused, cursed, called rogues and vagabonds, and treated with no sort of consideration. Even when they asked for the intervention of men of high social position, this intervention was repudiated, and unworthy things were said of these gentlemen. If the Union had been defeated, it was through want of union on the part of the men, and also by their want of energy in not seeking for work in the colonies or the towns. He did not much blame the men. They were the creatures of circumstances, and were degraded morally and physically by low wages.

Leaving the region of apology, however, Mr Taylor declared there had been no defeat. At this moment the National Union stood stronger in Suffolk than it did two years before. He then enumerated the good work it had done. It had raised the wages of agricultural labourers some 3s. a-week all round. It had largely reduced surplus labour in the Eastern counties by promoting migration and emigration. It had stimulated the men to better their condition by leaving their villages, whereas before the days

of the Union they had not the pluck to leave home in any numbers. Through the Union the farmers had learnt that there was in the combination of their men a power which must be respected. The result already was, that they treated their men better and talked more kindly of them, and they might be expected to treat the labourers better in future. Another result of the Union had been to create among the men a superior intelligence, so that you might now see them in the villages reading and discussing in a way never dreamt of before. In short, the labourers had begun to think, and though for a time they might think wrongly, it could not be doubted that their faculties were awakened and quickened through the agency of the Union. The 5500 Union members still left in Suffolk would stand shoulder to shoulder with all the greater determination through the persecution to which their brethren had been subjected. He believed the farmers sympathised with the men. What the Union had to fight against was the prejudices of the farmers, not their want of sympathy ; and he looked for a triumphant end of this agitation, which would insure the objects of the Union—contentment in the homes of industrious labourers, and better houses and better fare than if they belonged to the idle or criminal class. By bribery, or by intimidation, the men might for a time be estranged from the Union, but they would come back after a time ; and if the farmers remained hostile to the Union, through prejudice or ignorance of its principles and working, he promised that the Union executive would persevere, and not leave a village in the Eastern counties without a weekly visit from “ an agitator.”

It was hardly in human nature for the men to receive this speech with enthusiasm. There was a very poor show

of blue rosettes in the crowd, and such Unionist labourers as were present listened for the most part in silence. Mr W. G. Ward, one of the executive of the Union, tried to turn the laugh against the farmers by declaring that they too were defeated ; for during 20 years they had been trying to secure tenant-right, but could not do so, though a Conservative Government was in office, and had used the Conservative farmers for the purpose of getting there. The National Union, in the course of this great struggle, had raised nearly £20,000 to sustain the men, and though they had not succeeded in their immediate object, not a penny of the money had been wasted, for England had seen that the peasantry were the serfs of the farmers, just as the farmers were the serfs of the landlords. He went on to argue that English farmers grasped twice as much land as they could cultivate properly, the result being that the price of mutton was double, and dairy produce more than double, what it should be. While the farmers had doubled or trebled their profits during the last 150 years, the agricultural labourer was worse paid than he then was ; and in proof of this assertion, Mr Ward quoted from Arthur Young a statement that in 1720 an agricultural labourer received 5s. a-week, which would purchase a bushel of wheat, a bushel of malt, a pound of cheese, a pound of butter, and a pennyworth of tobacco. It was certain that to-day a labourer receiving 15s. a-week could not buy these commodities. The speaker ended by recommending free emigration, which would take the whip out of the hands of the farmers, so that before two years were over they would very likely take off their hats to a good labourer—supposing a good labourer was then to be found here.

It was hard to credit the stories told of the exagger-

ated expectations created among some of the labourers by the Union agitation. One elderly labourer in East Suffolk told his master that the Union was going to give him 9s. a-week to the end of his days. The farmer reasoned with him in vain. He did not know how the thing could be done, but felt sure it was to be done. At last the farmer said, "I'm glad you have got hold of so good a thing, and I can only say that if the Union does all this for its members, I'll join it myself." There was no shadow of foundation for such a hope, because at that time the benefit branch of the National Society had not been started, and the Federal Union promised no annuity in old age, though in one or more of its districts the advantages of a burial club were offered to its members. Another vague notion among the more ignorant Unionists was that there was soon to be a division of the land. In one case in the Wilford Hundred a farmer wished to engage some men by the year or half-year. "No," the answer was; "we cannot bind ourselves like that, because we don't know what this here Union is going to do for us." The farmer said, "But what difference can the Union make? You must work all the same, I suppose?" "Yes, master; but they do say they're going to do away with most of the farmers, and give the land to us instead." And they argued the matter with the farmer in their own way, without ill-feeling, but with a settled conviction that so the thing must be. "The farmers and parsons between them, you know, sir, take all the money out of the parish. Now, don't they? What does the Bible say? 'A man shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.' Very good. Now do you earn your bread by the sweat of your brow, sir? Does Parson ——?" One man said to his

old employer in a tone of unaffected pity, "I feel downright sorry for you, I do, master; because, you know, you'll soon have to leave this here farm. The labourers are to have it, I hear for certain." And even the children called after the farmer as he drove through the village, "The labourers will ride in the gigs; the farmers in the tumbrils!"

It was a cruel blow to such men to learn that for four or five months they had been in a fool's paradise. I fear that in some of the villages mischievous delusions were wantonly fostered—not, perhaps, by leading Union delegates, but by delegates' delegates. Newspaper correspondents did not hear these speeches, which were made on the village green or in the club-room of the village ale-house. But some of the agitators in the course of this struggle must have led the Unionists to believe that a division of the land was imminent. The men at last learned, from a circular issued by the executive committee of the National Union, that if they were to have land they must go to the colonies to get it, and that even work could not be insured for them at home. These were the terms in which the Union executive enlarged upon the resolution passed at Leamington :—

"The committee feel that the lock-out with which they early had to contend has entirely changed its character, in consequence of the determined action of the farmers in persisting, even at harvest-time, when there is the most urgent and pressing need for the labourers' services upon the land, in their refusal to give employment to Union men. The lock-out must now be regarded as a permanent and absolute discharge. The committee have still upon their hands upwards of a thousand men, whom they

feel bound to support until other employment can be found for them elsewhere. The committee are making arrangements with a view to the immediate emigration of the greater number of these men with their families; for the migration of others; and for the future employment of the rest."

In order to effect these objects, the executive appealed to the public and the Trades-Unionists of England for further pecuniary help, and concluded thus :—

"In providing for the future employment of the locked-out men now thrown entirely upon their hands, a large expenditure is inevitable; but the committee earnestly hope that money will be forthcoming to prevent the necessity of any of these poor men being driven by stress of circumstances, after the patience and fortitude with which they have borne the privations of this tremendous struggle, into the ignominious position of having to appeal to the tender mercies of their former employers. The committee believe that the policy which they are now pursuing is the wisest, safest, and best, and the one most calculated to insure the permanent success of their great cause."*

"Tender mercies" is a taunting phrase which was not

* Mr Taylor, general secretary of the National Union, wrote in the 'Labourers' Chronicle,' Aug. 8: "If there be a defeat in the Eastern counties, it has arisen from three causes: First, want of union among the labourers themselves, great numbers through fear not having joined the Union; many through coercion having joined, have left it; and those who have remained have not learned its true principles. Secondly, the men locked out have defeated themselves in crippling the funds by not removing to other occupations, which could be found in abundance for them in the country and abroad: thus their want of energy has been a weapon of strength to our opponents, and a source of weakness to the Union. Thirdly, it is manifest that there are men

applicable to the great body of the farmers who joined the Defence Associations. They spoke of their old labourers in the best spirit, and were without any feeling of triumph. The victory upon which they congratulated themselves was that achieved over strangers and interlopers who came between them and their labourers. All declared that the ex-Unionist and other labourers were working better than they had worked for many a long day. Ever since the Union agitation began the men had been dissatisfied, restless, and careless, and were taught to believe they were badly treated and oppressed. The storm cleared the air. Men came to know better what combination could and

in the Union whose age should have precluded them from membership; and although we are quite sure, so far as the National Union is concerned, not one of our delegates has wilfully deceived any one of them, yet there are numbers of poor old men who, in their ignorance and hope, have joined the Union anticipating a glorious relief from the poor-law guardians, and an annuity for life from the funds. Under these circumstances it is high time the executive took the steps which they have taken. Doubtless most of the industrious men—the best members—have secured employment near home, or have gone to a distance to it, rather than be a burden to the funds. Those who are able-bodied, and will not strive to fight the battle, but are content by their indolence to burden us and thus serve the farmers, will be as well out of the Union as in it, and the sooner out of it the better. And then it is time we at once placed ourselves right in the matter of the aged and infirm. The farmers, doubtless, have been gloating over the fact that they are relieving themselves of the responsibilities of their victims. Men, whose life-blood has been used in their service to amass their wealth, can now, under pretence of their misconduct, be placed on the funds of the Union, to the relief of the poor-rates. Much as we hate pauperism—much as we pity the victims of bad law, bad pay, and farmers' tyranny, or, in a word, of the old system—we say, once for all, that we have no annuity fund, no pauper asylum, and no charity doles to dispense; and the system which has degraded and pauperised them must now bear its own legitimate responsibilities."

could not do for them. Their leaders told them that all they wanted was greater faith in the Union and greater unanimity, and that if they got these the victory would yet be theirs. Such a view of the situation was true enough in its way. But it was a view into a more or less distant future, and the agricultural labourer cannot be expected to look so far ahead. On the whole, the present is enough for him ; and he knew that just now the masters, who, as he had been taught to think, were weak, proved too strong for him. So he set to work again, at first with some sullenness, but was far more intent upon his work and did it more thoroughly than when his mind was unsettled and the issue between master and man was doubtful. People who know the Suffolk labourer well, and like him well too, said that he would not long harbour ill-will. There had been a fair stand-up fight in a field and at a time chosen by himself ; he was fairly beaten ; and when the immediate soreness of defeat passed away, there would be a better appreciation of each other on both sides. I trust this prediction may be the correct one. The Suffolk labourer is a very likeable fellow ; and if just after the lock-out he was not quite satisfied with his employer, I can vouch for the fact that the latter was better satisfied with the zeal shown and the work done by his men than he had lately had reason to be.

Among the taunts which Suffolk farmers had to endure from Union agitators was one which perhaps sank deeper than any other. They were charged with not knowing their own business. They only half cultivate the land, it was said ; and townspeople were told that meat and dairy produce would be much cheaper—half its present price, said one speaker at Woodbridge—if the farmers were more

intelligent and made the most of their holdings. Now, neither in East Anglia nor in any other part of England have the farmers got as far as perpetual corn or barley growing; and no doubt the steam-plough and artificial manure will yet do much to increase production there. But my observation convinces me that the farmers of Norfolk and Suffolk, as a class, are at least as intelligent and enterprising as in any other part of England. Lincolnshire may, perhaps, rank higher, but probably in no other two counties south of the Tweed is more capital invested proportionately to acreage, or more done by high-class, scientific farming, to increase production in stock or cereals. The Unionists were informed at Woodbridge that in England there are only 75 sheep per 100 acres, while in Wales there are 125, and in Scotland 154; and this fact was mentioned as a convincing proof that English farmers are behind the age, and "grasp twice as much land as they can cultivate properly." On this subject a Suffolk farmer wrote to me:—

"It is absurdly untrue that we are understocked in this part of the country. In a light-land district like ours it would be simple madness not to take into account the risk of being left without sufficient food for our stock in a dry season such as we have just passed through. It is a fact that in such a season we are overstocked; the farmers have been at their wits' end to find pasture; and the markets have been flooded with sheep and cattle in consequence."

CHAPTER VI.

THE STRIKE AND LOCK-OUT REVIEWED—NOTICE SERVED BY MEN IN THE WILFORD HUNDRED — ITS TREATMENT BY EMPLOYERS — CASE OF THE FARMERS STATED—MISREPRESENTATIONS OF DELEGATES—A FARMER'S REPLY TO HIS MEN — THE ISSUE CHOSEN BY FARMERS—LABOURERS' CLAIMS SHOULD HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH ON THEIR MERITS—FARMERS OPPOSED TO ANY UNION—DIMENSIONS OF THE STRUGGLE—PROPORTION OF MEN AND EMPLOYERS ENGAGED — BOTH CLASSES DISUNITED — PROBABLE SPREAD OF UNIONISM—WISE TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT — INFLAMMATORY LANGUAGE OF UNION LEADERS AND NEWSPAPERS—THE UNION CAUSE THEREBY INJURED—A COSTLY LUXURY—MODERATION ESSENTIAL TO FUTURE SUCCESS—RESULTS OF STRUGGLE.

HERE is the original notice sent to one of the 12 farmers in the Wilford Hundred from whom an increase of wages was requested :—

“ ALDERTON, *february 22. 1874.*

“ DEAR SIR—the Agricultural Labours of this branch of the National Agricultural Union in your employ beg respectfully to inform you that on and after 2 of March 1874, they will require A rise in their wages of One Shilling per weak A weeks work to Consist of fifty fours being desirous of retaining good relations between employer and employed and to assure you that no unbecoming feelings prompt us to such A course we invite you if our terms are not in

accordances with your views to appoint an earley time to meet us so that we may fairley Consider the mater and arrange our affairs amicably.—Yours obedient Servent

“THE COMMITTEE.”

No outsider can read this letter, so respectful and becoming in its terms, without a strong feeling that it deserved at least a courteous answer. There is no hint in it of “foreign” pressure, and a good deal in its wording and composition negatives in more senses than one the suspicion of “dictation” from any central executive.* The letter, it will be seen, comes from the committee of the local branch. In the government of the National Union, the committee of the district rank next, and they represent an aggregate of branches, the central executive coming after them. Thus the demand for higher wages in the Wilford Hundred, a demand which the farmers treated as a declaration of war, did not, on the face of it, proceed from the final and supreme authority of the Union, but from direct representatives of labourers in the very locality where the rise was demanded. According to the farmers themselves—at least the more reasonable ones—such men may fairly claim to represent their fellow-labourers upon any labour question, and are not open to the charge of “foreign” interference. It will be seen that the Committee served no peremptory summons upon the 12 farmers. They did not think the claim so strong as to preclude argument, and in moderate, conciliatory language they invited a meeting of masters and men to discuss the claim. Looking only at the letter,

* See, however, the notices since communicated to me, and given in the Introduction. Though badly spelt, the notice in the text is in the stereotyped form.

nothing could be more reasonable than the request of the labourers. On the other hand, nothing was more certain to irritate and provoke a breach between employers and employed than the course taken by the farmers. What they did, after laying their heads together, was simply to ignore the letter. They would not discuss the question of wages with any committee ; but that was not all, for some of them did not discuss it even with their own labourers. The letter bore the Union stamp, and that was enough. The week passed, and pay-day came. In one instance I know the men said, civilly enough, that they had hoped for some reply about the extra shilling, and were told the farmers had nothing to say to it. Naturally they were dissatisfied ; “the Committee” felt that they were treated with contempt ; there was a strike against the 12 farmers, and that was the beginning of strife in East Suffolk. Other Wilford Hundred farmers stood by the 12, and retaliated by locking out ; and I think it clear that if the 12 were justified in resisting the demand for higher wages, their brother-farmers were equally justified in coming to their rescue, instead of standing by like sheep waiting their turn to be fleeced while their friends were being ruined or beaten. The whole question turns upon the stand made by the 12 selected farmers ; and here it is very material to remember that, from the outset of the struggle, the extra shilling demanded by the men was regarded by the employers as a matter of little moment. I say nothing of the hours of labour, because there is some doubt whether the men meant to ask for any change in this respect.* The farmers, however, gave battle neither to

* At the time this notice was served, a Union rule forbade the men to demand at the same time higher wages and shorter hours of labour. This rule was repealed at the last conference of the National Union.

keep down wages nor to keep up hours of labour, but to vindicate a principle.

It will be readily gathered that in order to come to a sound conclusion upon the matter we must read between the lines of the notice given by the men, and consider what spirit the Union had encouraged towards the farmers before the letter was written. Judging them by the letter alone, the farmers did not, in ignoring it, show the same moderation and forbearance as the men ; but of course they were not unreasonable without reasons. Whether these were sufficient reasons is another question. At any rate, I will try to state them fairly, so that they may be understood and fairly appreciated. We must remember, then, that at the time the letter was received there had been nearly two years of Union agitation. "Throughout this period," say the farmers, "the Union had been sending into our villages delegates—some of them of dubious character, all fluent and unscrupulous—who had heaped upon us the most indiscriminate abuse, holding us up to the ridicule, hatred, and contempt of men with whom we had previously lived on the best terms, and making them unsettled, discontented, difficult to manage, and factious. These delegates had circulated all over the country the grossest misrepresentations as to the rate of wages and the treatment of the men. They had declaimed on every village green against farmers, landlords, and parsons ; and the burden of their song was, ' Boys, if you don't get what you ask, you shall strike at barley-sowing—you shall strike at haysel and harvest—till the brutal oppressors who now humbug you and rob you, who ride in their fine gigs to market while you walk, shall no longer be able to trample you under foot. Only stick to the Union, boys, and whatever you ask the farmers must give you.' " "However specious

the letter, we could not," the farmers continued, "forget the taunts and insults which had so long been aimed at us by those who were clearly behind the letter. We could not forget that the Union had destroyed the peace of our villages, and we determined not to recognise in any way a combination so conducted. If our men had anything to say to us on their own account we were ready to hear them, but we were also determined to ignore concerted demands made by an anonymous committee, and showing the cloven hoof of the Union. Therefore, when, on the pay-night after we received the notice, our men said, 'We were in hopes you were going to give us another shilling, master,' the reply made by some of us was in substance as follows: 'No, my friends, we can have no dealing with your Union. You tell us we have always been good friends to you. We hope to remain so; but we feel hurt and insulted when you put yourself under the guidance of men who hold us up to you as monsters of cruelty, oppressors, impostors, useless mouths, monopolists, cumberers of the ground, men who fatten on your labour, and your worst enemies. Before we can be brought to deal with your Union, as it is now constituted, we must confess that we deserve all these hard names, and must stand before you like beaten curs, without a bit of manhood or self-respect left in us. We can't, therefore, grant your application.'" "Well, but, master," the men said, in what I believe is not an imaginary dialogue, "we shan't come back no more if you doan't give us that there shillun; and we like you right well, and we doan't complain of nowthin, and we doan't wont to leave you." The reply was, "No, I believe that; but you are slaves to your Union, and must do as you are told. I am sorry for it; it is a bad job both for you and me—worse even for you than for me. But it is clear

to me that I must make a stand. 'If I give you this shilling, I am told you will soon be striking for another. Your delegates assure you that you have nothing to do but to combine and show a bold front, and then the masters can refuse you nothing. This is a mistake, as I fear you will find to your cost. You are much better off than people imagine, and much better off by comparison with town workmen than you are yourselves aware. If your Union succeeds in breaking up the old relations between farmer and labourer, mark my word, it will be years before you as a body are as well off as you now are. I know what your grievances are, and I say that for the last 20 years your position has been steadily improving. You know it is improving rapidly now. I won't give you an extra shilling under coercion. If I do, you'll be told to try the same plan again. Now, farming profits won't stand such a system, and I won't encourage you in it. If you like to stay on, and by-and-by come to me and tell me your grievances, I will meet you fairly, as I have always tried to do heretofore. But I tell you again, I will not be driven, and harassed, and have the work of my farm hindered and turned upside down by your Union."

The farmer's prediction in this dialogue has come true. It was placed on paper long before the Union surrendered, and therefore has the merit of being really a forecast. But now the struggle has ended, and the farmers remain literally in possession of the field, the question may be asked, Did they do well in fighting upon the issue presented in the Wilford Hundred and Newmarket? Their victory has not altered my opinion that they did ill.

The labourers made a request which in itself was reasonable, and expressed in the most temperate language. It was met, in effect, by this sort of reply: "The people

who instigate you to ask for an extra shilling a-week hardly ever open their mouths without abusing us. We dislike and distrust them. We object to their interference between you and ourselves. We believe they will set you on to make fresh demands, and we will not listen to any application made on your behalf in the name of the Union." It was very much as though a man resisted what he recognised as a good cause of action because he hated the plaintiff's attorney. I think the labourers' claim should have been considered on its merits, in the conciliatory spirit which the local committee invited, and of which they set the example. It would have been wise, as well as generous, if the farmers had followed this example, taking the opportunity which a friendly conference would have afforded of deprecating the violent language used against them, and showing that such language was not only unjust, but calculated to defeat the very object of the Union. I have seen a good deal of the Suffolk labourer, and have found him, as a rule, singularly open to reason. If anybody will take the trouble to put things before him in a plain, fair way, he is quite ready to admit that the labour question has two sides, and that farmers, like himself, have their difficulties. I believe he has made a most liberal discount from the rant and roar, the large promises and the coarse invective, of some of the Union speakers, and that, especially in the early stage of this controversy, he might have been turned towards employers who, in his heart of hearts, he cannot help feeling do not, as a class, deserve the hard things that have been said of them. But the farmers' policy of ignoring the Union has been fatal to any hope of conciliating Unionist labourers. Even the delegates would, I think, have taken a different

tone had they been differently met. But from the first they have been social outlaws. When they have been noticed at all, every tongue has wagged against them, every pen has been used to write them down. Whether farmers or delegates began this wordy war, one need hardly inquire. But "flouts and gibes and jeers" are sorry weapons either in the senate or in farmerland. The "paid agitator" retorted upon "the brutal oppressor of the poor," and much more abundantly; and what began as a movement for securing better pay to farm-labourers, and otherwise improving their condition, ended in something very like a class struggle.

After seeing and hearing a good deal of the "Defence" movement at Newmarket, Bury, and in East Suffolk, I cannot resist the conclusion that the mass of the farmers were fighting "squarely," not against one, but against any and every Union. There were some attempts by the longer heads among them to take up, or seem to take up, a more tenable position. At Bury, for example, the farmers were persuaded to adopt a formula which pledged them to oppose only the Union "as at present constituted;" but I am satisfied that three-fourths of the members of the West Suffolk Association only accepted that limitation because, as defined and enlarged upon to them, it concealed under the thinnest diplomatic veil objections to the Union under any conditions which made a Union really formidable. Again, the executive of the Lincolnshire League were willing to rescind all objectionable rules; but the labouring men in Suffolk who belonged to this League were locked out all the same, and the farmers' representatives in Suffolk refused to discuss the question of rules even with men whose position outside either Union should

have freed them from all suspicion. The fact is, that to many farmers of the old school the very notion of combination among farm labourers and their alliance with agitators from a distance was strange and unnatural. Yet, if the right and the necessity of trade combinations are admitted anywhere and in any calling, I think they should be admitted in rural communities and among farm-labourers, who, as units widely scattered, with most imperfect means of intercommunication, are, or have hitherto been, powerless against bad masters. That there are such masters in Suffolk, as in every county—and, for that matter, in every town—it would be nonsense to deny; and the landlords and leading employers who are the mainstay of the Defence Associations, and who know they have done their duty, perhaps more than their strict duty, towards their labourers, are apt to forget the class of farmers with whom it is both a habit and a necessity to pinch and screw, and who, for example, have made use of allotments given and good cottages built by their landlords as a leverage for underpaying their labourers. Instances of this kind are to be found in Suffolk. Kinder-hearted men than the larger farmers I have met, or more intelligent, it would be hard to find in any class of employers. They are men of capital and skill. Some of them have had a special scientific training. They are men of the world, utterly unlike the typical farmer as he exists in the imagination of townsfolk; and the sooner the inhabitants of towns understand that the old type of farmer is passing away, the more accurate will be their appreciation of the labour problem in rural districts. It is a pleasure to meet and talk with such men; but one cannot help feeling also that there is another more numerous, though far less influential, class of farmers whom

it is difficult for any casual visitor in Boeotia to see and talk with, and some of whom probably more than justify the labourers' stories of "hard" treatment. The men tell you they want a Union to protect them, not from good but from bad masters. Unfortunately the strike both in East and West Suffolk was directed against some of the best and most liberal farmers in the county. The answer to this home-thrust may be that the best way of influencing the mass was by dealing with the employers who were most likely to respond to a reasonable request, and whose example was most likely to weigh with others. But from such an organisation as a labourers' Union it would be too much to expect a logical and at all points defensible answer. The men would just take the course which seemed to lead them straightest and soonest to their one object.

The hope and aim of the farmers were to stamp out the Union. The Union received a temporary check, and for a time its ranks may be thinned. But I did not find among the labourers any sense of total defeat, or any stronger feeling than one of passing discouragement. The weak-kneed among them gave up their tickets ; but by far the larger number held on, and, including Nationals and Federals, six or seven thousand Union labourers were left in Suffolk even when the lock-out was ended. No doubt it would have been possible for the farmers to complete their victory, when the exchequer of both Unions was empty, by locking out every Unionist labourer. Such a course would have followed logically from what the farmers had done already. One reason why this extreme measure could not be taken was, that the farmers in Suffolk were no more united than their labourers. Indeed,

a glance at the last Census returns reduced the contest to comparatively small proportions. In 1871 there were in Suffolk 38,856 agricultural labourers, exclusive of 733 shepherds, 1549 gardeners, 233 indoor farm-servants, and 231 woodmen. We may omit the 457 gamekeepers and 143 "vermin destroyers." Strike off, then, the odd 8856—a liberal deduction—from the first class for boys and old men not eligible for the Union, or never likely to join it, and you have over three-fourths of the adult agricultural labourers in the county who have held aloof from the Union. Next pass to the employer class. We will not count the 218 "landed proprietors," so enumerated; nor the 1300 "farmers' sons, brothers, grandsons, and nephews;" nor the 746 farm-bailiffs. But there are 4654 "farmers and graziers" in Suffolk, and I doubt greatly whether all the Defence Associations in East and West Suffolk together mustered the odd 650. If the labourers, then, failed, as no doubt they did fail, solely through want of unanimity, the farmers were still more divided; and it was a material fact that even during the heat of the late struggle, about one-half the Union labourers in Suffolk were kept in work by their masters. We must bear in mind, then, that the struggle was waged not by classes, but only by sections of each class. Both men and masters may become more united hereafter; but union will do more for the men than for the masters, and will make them more formidable as a fighting power than the masters. It is a miserable prospect; but such as it is, it is mainly of the farmers' creation. They would not treat; they chose rather to fight, and to fight upon an issue which, though nominally resting upon an extra shilling of wages, really involved the right of the men to combine. The point

they overlook is, that in spite of them the Union lives in Suffolk, and I believe will continue to increase. It is contrary to all our experience in the towns to suppose that a trade union can be destroyed by a counter-combination of employers. The very efforts of the farmers to root up the Union will only deepen the conviction of the men that their interests are served by it, and that they will do well to cherish it. If I am justified in this conclusion, and if, as I firmly believe, whatever manly instinct of independence the East Anglian rustic possesses has been aroused by the virtual denial of his right to combine in his own way, and choose his own leaders, then it follows that the farmers will have to carry on their business side by side with the very organisation they so greatly dread and have done so much to provoke. Directly or indirectly, their interests must hereafter be affected by the operations of the Union. Would it not have been better to throw aside prejudice, make some allowance for ignorant exaggeration and strong language, and try to make the best of the inevitable? The farmers were perfectly right in combining in their turn. They would have been foolish to stand by and see themselves cut off in detail by strikes. Their Defence Associations, with the power of locking out as an *ultima ratio*, were not only necessary, but indispensable, or they would have invited aggression by being obviously powerless to resist it. I think they were far too slow in thus preparing for the common defence, and are still far too disunited. But as soon as they felt strong enough to act in concert at all, it was sound policy to show the moderation which should accompany strength and higher intelligence. As it is, they tried to crush an organisation which exists and will flourish in spite of them; they have, without designing to do so,

helped to nourish very bitter class feelings, and have won a victory which can hardly fail to lead to reprisals when the Union raises its head again.

If the farmers were shortsighted and resolutely unconciliatory, the Union leaders, by inflammatory language and abuse, did much to make conciliation difficult or even impossible. Week after week the market-place in each rural centre rung with tirades against "Farmer Grump," his luxury, his tyranny, his greed for land, his ignorance how to make the best of his land, his hard-fistedness and hard-heartedness. The villages were "stumped" in the same spirit, but with coarser tongues. The British farmer stood aghast at the portrait painted of him by delegates and by delegates' delegates; at hearing the fruits of his by no means lucrative occupation of Whiteacres and Blackacres represented as ill-gotten gains wrung from the vitals of the poor; and his mild rule at the hall or lodge farm made to appear a sort of village despotism, tempered by beer. He did not laugh at this invective, and at the men who used it; and they were naturally delighted to find that it made him very hot and angry. A ribald catechism, written by a district chairman of the National Union, and sold at the waggon from which the delegates declaimed, seemed expressly designed to offend and alienate the landlords and the clergy as well as the farmers; and books of labourers' lyrics were published, and soon became popular, some of them harmless, some meritorious, but mostly irritant.* Moreover, as if to show that the virulence of the waggon or the platform did not spring from words spoken in haste and heat, language quite as strong was printed from week to week in a

* Specimens of these and other songs of the period are given in the Appendix.

newspaper professing to be the journal of the National Union, conducted by the treasurer, and containing frequent letters signed by the general secretary. This newspaper circulates widely among the labourers, who read it, or have it read to them, on the Saturday night or Sunday morning, when, I fear, it is often the only sermon they hear. But many of the farmers read it too, finding, I suppose, a horrible fascination in its recital of their supposed misdeeds, and an ever new amazement at the brutal oppression of which they are accused. You need not search long in its pages for samples of strong language. The general secretary, Mr Henry Taylor, wrote, August 1, 1874: "Rather than be tyrannised over by a set of drunken blackguards of farmers for a paltry 13s., 15s., or 18s. per week, and an occasional 'kick-out' like a dog, I would tramp my legs off to my knees. If I could express my disgust at the conduct of the brutes in the Eastern Counties I would do so, but I cannot." In the same journal, August 15, he wrote: "We shall have to go into it again after harvest, my boys. The farmers threaten to lock out again. I do not doubt but that they will harass us all they can; and if they do, we must retaliate. Now, the Union men have their redress in their own hands. Let every man who is victimised by the farmers by a lock-out at once—unless he can drop into another job—throw himself on the rates. Let there be no parley. Make a desperate effort and show your determination, and determine not to be defeated. I hate pauperism and I hate crime, but I would rather see our prisons and workhouses filled to overflowing for a time than that such tyrants should get fat on the blood of the industrious toilers, as they have done in the past. There is no temper in this; I speak coolly and deliberately."

The more is the pity. When the general secretary can stigmatise the farmers as "drunken blackguards," "brutes," and "tyrants," who, like the ogres in children's story-books, fatten on labourers' blood, what can we expect from men of inferior degree and of smaller responsibility among the Union officials? I heard several of Mr Taylor's speeches upon the lock-out, and they were marked by a sobriety of thought and a reasoning power as much calculated to advance the Union cause as the foregoing epithets are to injure it. One is astonished that such a man should have allowed himself to print—and this, I am afraid, habitually—language which indicates not strength, but weakness. The Trade Unions, which have become great powers in our industrial centres, have not been made so by an indiscriminate and vulgar abuse of employers; nor is it likely that the leaders of these Unions, whose subscriptions helped so materially to support the farm-labourers in their recent struggle, will countenance such language when it is brought to their notice. It is still less likely that this violent and unjust denunciation of a whole class of employers can be acceptable to men like Mr Morley and Mr Dixon, who have also subscribed largely towards the Union funds, but who are themselves employers of labour, and must feel the gross impropriety and injustice of such wholesale aspersions. I am sorry that the influence of "the Consulting Committee" of the Union, composed for the most part of gentlemen of wealth and position, was not from the first more strenuously and successfully directed against the exuberant and mischievous declamation of Union officials. If these continued taunts and insults had been meant to inflame the passions of the men, to irritate the masters, and make a friendly solution impossible, they

could not have been better fitted to secure that end. No one can say with confidence that, if the delegates had been temperate and forbearing, the farmers would have consented to recognise the Union. But it may be said, with very great confidence indeed, that the dirt thrown at the farmers so persistently added strength to their prejudices against the Union, and removed any scruples they might have had about ignoring it. To persuade the bulk of the Suffolk farmers that it was politic to treat with a labourers' Union would have been at any time difficult, but the course taken by the delegates and the 'Labourers' Chronicle' made it impossible. There were farmers and landlords, too, in Suffolk, who had no morbid dread of the Union, and whose influence would have been thrown into the scale in favour of its recognition, not because they believed it was wholly good in itself, but because they thought it inevitable. Virulent speaking and writing, however, neutralised the influence of these men with their fellows; and if ever there was a doubt in what direction the current would set, the "agitators" removed the doubt. The slanders and libels spoken and written upon the farmer and landowner class have, from that point of view, been a most costly luxury. No court of law has been asked to award damages in respect of them; but if they alone stood in the way of conciliation, as most employers in the Eastern Counties aver, they may be said to have cost the National Union and their sympathisers the £20,000 spent in maintaining the locked-out labourers in idleness. I doubt whether the outside public will subscribe so largely again in order that a handful of men, whose mission should be peace, may stir up strife and lessen the chances of peace. The first work, therefore, of the National Union after the

severe fall it has received should be to set its own house in order, learn a lesson of forbearance in speech, and sternly admonish such of its officials as have offended in this matter.

Good and bad results will follow from the struggle as from most great or small events of history. It was a thing to avoid, if possible, for it caused much bad feeling and individual suffering. But it is possible to discern germs of good in it too; at any rate, it is not an unmixed evil. The men on their side have learnt to distrust large promises. They know now that the land is not to be shared among them—just yet. They have also learnt that the farmers are not so easily beaten as they were taught to believe; that though labour is indispensable in agriculture as in manufactures, skilled labour is not so essential, and hands are therefore more easily supplied. We may be pretty sure that strikes by farm-labourers will no longer be entered upon with a light heart. On the other hand, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the existence of the Union and its work during the last two years have tended to raise wages. The farmers declare that the Union has had nothing to do with the increase of 2s. or 3s. a-week within this period; the law of supply and demand has done it all. Perhaps both causes may have been in operation. Few impartial observers, however, can have gone among the peasantry here or elsewhere without forming the opinion that it was not well for them to be so helpless and powerless in the hands of employers as they were before the Union was established. Taking them in the mass, they were ignorant, unenergetic, spiritless, and shiftless, very isolated, very dependent, and wanting some stimulus to rouse them into a more vigorous, manly life. The Union,

along with much mischievous teaching, has given them such a stimulus. It made them read and think of matters outside the village. It has increased their self-respect, and increased also the respect of employers for a class which has so soon thrown off its old lethargy, and shown discipline and organisation, imperfect as both may yet be. The lock-out disclosed the unexpected force which lay behind the Union, and the money as well as the sympathy which farm-labourers can command all over England. Evidently the time has passed when they can be treated merely as children of a larger growth, and dealt with harshly or tenderly, according to the mood of individual employers. Both masters and men must, therefore, be much less sensible than they really are if the events of these six months have not taught them mutual respect for each other's strength. If the labourers miscalculated theirs, it was none the less real.

As one result of the lock-out, farming and rural life altogether will not be quite as pleasant as they have hitherto been. Old relations, in themselves very agreeable, will gradually pass away. The men, whether well or ill advised, insist on independence, and the farmers can hardly be blamed for taking them at their word. "Thou hast appealed to Cæsar; to Cæsar shalt thou go." Hitherto, if the men have been underpaid in stated, regular wages, they have received many benefits. I met with farmers who have paid old men as much as young ones, though they were unable to do half the work of young ones. "My old men," said one farmer to me, "have worked for me during the years they were able to work their best. I cannot bear to reduce their wages at a time when they most want little comforts." Such consideration as this—and it is not rare

among well-to-do farmers — really supplies the pensions which benefit clubs are started to give in old age, and which are the best and most necessary provision in any benefit society. Again, as the same farmer pointed out, farm-labourers for the most part receive the same wages in winter as in summer. But if these wages really represent work done, they ought to be considerably less in winter than in summer. The men work from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. in summer and from daybreak to 4 P.M. in winter. “Does a manufacturer,” asked this farmer, “pay his men at the same rate whether they work twelve hours or whether they work nine hours a-day? Does he keep them on when work is slack, as it is with us during the winter? Does he invent jobs, as we often have to do, in order to keep our men employed? The fact is, we are not clever enough or sharp enough. We must for the future cut and contrive, after the manner of manufacturers and great warehousemen, only employing hands when we want them, and paying them according to the hours they work.” I do not believe that this farmer will be as hard as his word. Like many others of his class, he is too well disposed towards his men to treat them less liberally, now that peace is restored, than he has been in the habit of treating them. One of the old men who had so foolishly joined the Union came to an East Suffolk farmer when the Union allowance was withdrawn, and said piteously, “Well, sir, you were right when you told me I should not find my new friends better than my old ones. I’m sent adrift now. I’ve lost my old place; it’s filled up. I’m an old man now, not worth man’s wages, and I’m afeard I shall end by going to the work’us. I wish I hadn’t a bin such a born fule. Can you help me, master?” It is pleasant to add that the

master did help him, and set the old man on to hoe turnips at 14s. a-week. "It won't be his fault either, poor fellow, if he doesn't earn the money," said the farmer, heartily. The old labourer declared that he felt "a deal happier than he had done ever since the Union broke out."

Some of the men up to the last believed they would receive compensation from the Union for being kept out of their harvest; and two of the delegates who addressed a meeting at Cheveley, after the withdrawal of the Union allowance, were met by these men with reproaches and strong language. "What has become of our money?" "Where is the rent of our cottages to come from?" the labourers cried. And in answer to the question why they did not emigrate, they called out that they were not going to leave their homes to be "sold like slaves."* This sort of recrimination is common enough upon the failure of any enterprise. The Cheveley men for the most part have comfortable cottages and good allotments. They are not, therefore, disposed to emigrate. Yet it is clear that good will come from the lock-out through the efforts of the Union to draw off surplus labour to the Colonies, and thus diminish

* In an address circulated by Mr Arch shortly after the lock-out ended, he complains of the insurmountable obstacle, which he describes as being of a painful nature, that arose in the course of the struggle, not only from the great reluctance of the men to embrace the splendid opportunities of free emigration offered, but also a general indisposition to accept employment that involved removal to other parts of the country. He declares that the Union will in future direct its whole income, energy, and influence to the practical work of emigration and migration, and, with the support and the co-operation of the labourers, will carry out the policy of emigration upon which it has already entered, until the landed gentry, whether proprietors or farmers, shall cry, "Hold! enough."

competition for employment among the farm-labourers who cannot be induced to stir from home. Another good result of the lock-out is the attention which has been directed to the bad cottages, and the stimulus which this publicity will afford to the building of good ones. That it has taught the farmers to dispense with much useless labour is beyond question. "Instead of employing twenty-six men," said a farmer to me (this was before harvest), "I am doing with seventeen, and my work was never more forward." This is a sample of many similar statements made in all parts of Suffolk. The economical advantage is not a small one, and it will tell in favour both of master and men. The farmer will insist on getting more work out of his labourers, but will be able to afford more pay. I hope other results of the struggle will be to increase piece-work, yearly engagements, payment for overtime in money, not beer, and at the same time to diminish perquisites, adding their value to the regular wages. The public will have learnt by the lock-out that these regular wages, in the Eastern Counties at least, do not represent actual receipts by the bulk of the peasantry, and that the peasant's hardships have been exaggerated. At Woodbridge, a labourer who was put forward to speak at a public meeting declared that he and his children were starving on 13s. a-week. It so happened that the man's employer was present, and called out, "Why, you know very well you have had 17s. 6d. a-week from me ever since last Michaelmas, and if you had only kept at work you would not have earned less (including harvest) than an average of a pound for the year." "I know all that," replied the man, "but arn't 13s. my regular wage? You hav'nt no business to take into 'count what I arn beyond my 13s. That's my wage, and

no more." And this, no doubt, was the theory upon which other labourers prompted their advocates, and themselves succeeded in enlisting sympathy. In short, the portrait of "the brutal oppressor" and of "the down-trodden serf," as painted for the information of people outside East Anglia, requires to be greatly softened.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME EAST SUFFOLK VILLAGES—STRADBROKE—SCHOOLS—BENEFIT CLUBS—WAGES—FOOD—THE UNION—MIGRATION TO THE LARGE TOWNS—POOR-RATES—EDUCATION—OAKLEY—SIR E. KERRISON'S ESTATE—THE ALLOTMENT SYSTEM—ITS ADVANTAGES—SIZE OF ALLOTMENTS—RENTS—SMALL FARMS—COTTAGES—OVER-CROWDING—PLAN FOR PREVENTING, ON OAKLEY ESTATE—BRUNDISH—A PEASANT'S HOME—WILBY—A WRETCHED FAMILY—COTTAGES WITH ONE BEDROOM—DIFFICULTY OF PROVIDING REQUISITE ACCOMMODATION.

IN East Suffolk the farms, as a rule, are much smaller than those further west in the same county; and where you find small farms, you often find insufficient capital and unthrifty farming. Take this sketch of Stradbroke, the centre of the Hundred of Hoxne, which contains twenty-five parishes entirely agricultural, with an aggregate population of about 15,000, and, as I was somewhat pathetically told, with no town, no market, no turnpike, no lawyer, and not a mile of railway in the whole Hundred. Happy the place which has some at least of these "wants"! In Stradbroke parish, with an acreage of 3700, there are about forty farmers, the largest of whom does not farm much more than 200 acres. The property is a good deal subdivided. There is no resident landowner, or man of independent means. The population consists entirely of farmers, labourers, a few small tradesmen, two clergymen, a Dissenting minister, a

doctor, and the school-teachers. Stradbroke is, in fact, a type of scores of Suffolk villages where the social conditions tend to depress, and much depends on the one or two educated men who, like the clergy, are bound to the soil. In this respect Stradbroke is well cared for. The church has been restored with excellent taste. Large and efficient schools exist, one for the sons of farmers and tradesmen, containing 30 boys, with two teachers, and another mixed elementary school for the children of labourers, attended by 200 children, with six teachers. Both are under Government inspection. Three local benefit clubs have been established for the labourers and their families : (1) a clothing club, with about 160 depositors, who are helped by a considerable bonus obtained from the voluntary contributions of landlords and farmers ; (2) a labourers' boot club, in which there are forty labourers who have three or more children ; (3) a children's shoe club, in which there are about ninety depositors. The last two clubs are supported chiefly by the vicar, the Rev. J. C. Ryle. The sick and burial societies most in favour are those affiliated to the Oddfellows, Manchester Unity, and similar associations.

At Stradbroke, as in most other parts of the county, the nominal range of wages for an adult labourer is 13s. a-week, but the total earnings of a labourer in regular work all the year through, including harvest money and other advantages, may be estimated at 15s. a-week. As there is no excess of labour in the parish, no steady man ever need be out of work. There is an agricultural gang of sixteen boys under a licensed gangmaster. Many boys about ten years of age are also employed singly. Most of the farmers pay their wages every Friday night ; and, as a rule, no regular labourer is made to lose a day on account of wet

weather. In the parish there are about 160 families of labourers, including many old couples who are past work. I am told that few of them eat any meat except during harvest; they live chiefly on bread made of good seconds flour, and baked at home—the universal practice in most Suffolk villages. What is reported about the bread diet of the Stradbroke peasantry does not agree with the statements made to me elsewhere. In another village in the Hoxne Union, the village butcher says that the labourers now buy double the quantity of meat (mutton and beef) they used to buy two or three years ago, and in West Suffolk similar testimony is borne. The land around Stradbroke is for the most part a strong, heavy clay, and is almost entirely arable, the rent varying from 27s. to 48s. per acre, with an average of about 32s. At the time I passed through the village, not more than fifteen or twenty labourers belonged to the National or Federal Union. At one time there were more, but some have left the Union, which, here as elsewhere, ebbs and flows in a way for which it is very difficult to account. How far the lock-out, or the fear of one, operated in preventing men from joining the Union, it is impossible to say; but in some places, both in and around Bury and in the Hoxne district, the lock-out occasionally had the very opposite effect, and seemed to arouse a spirit of antagonism and defiance among the bolder spirits. For example, in three parishes of the Hoxne Hundred—Fressingfield, Withersdale, and Metfield—sixty men joined the Union since the lock-out, though before there were scarcely any Union labourers in those villages. The same difficulty prevails in ascertaining the class of labourers who become Unionists. Some of the farmers in West Suffolk admitted to me that their steadiest

hands—the most intelligent and the best workers—joined the Union. At Stradbroke I was assured, on what should be excellent authority, that the Unionists were the laziest and the least valuable class of labourers, while so far the steadiest and best men refused to have anything to do with the Union. This refusal may have been influenced by the fact that most of the farmers joined a Defence Association, and warned their men that they would not be employed if they joined the Union. “Up to the present time,” said my informant here, “I can detect no bad feeling between the employers and the employed, but only an uneasy and uncomfortable feeling as to the future consequences of the labour movement,—a feeling which is shared by the labourers quite as much as by the farmers.” In this, as in other parishes, the return from the North of England of men who were tempted by high wages to seek work there, and the reports they brought back of bad lodgings and expensive living, helped to destroy illusions and keep people quiet. The more intelligent and reflecting among the labourers quite understand that, taking rent, house accommodation, cost of living, and other things, into account, a married labourer is quite as well off with 14s. a-week in his village as he would be with 20s. in a large town. The poor-rate in Stradbroke is now about 2s. 5d. in the pound for the whole year; the highway rate, 8d. Before the introduction of the new Poor-Law, I believe the poor-rate was sometimes 19s. in the pound, or more; but, of course, the valuation and assessment must then have been low. A man who now farms four acres here, and pays £16 a-year for his land and cottage, says that when he began life as a labourer thirty years ago, wages were 7s. a-week. There is singularly little crime in the parish.

"Perhaps the worst feature in our village society," said the gentleman to whom I am indebted for much of the foregoing information, "is the ignorance which prevails through the want of good schools in days gone by. Few of the middle-aged people can read with anything like ease, and many not at all. Those who can read have very little taste for it; and the chief demand in a large lending library, established here by the vicar, is for children's books and books with pictures. The ignorance in which most of the labourers' families live of the simplest facts in the geography or history of their own country is so extraordinary, that no one can have any idea of it unless he mixes with them and talks to them. This ignorance makes them painfully liable to be led away and deceived, and renders it necessary to be extremely tolerant and compassionate in our judgment of their doings. They often form the most absurd opinions, and propound the most preposterous notions, upon social questions and political economy, simply because they know no better. I trust that education in a few years will do something to mend this state of things."

Almost every house in Stradbroke has a garden, and on one farm 50 acres are parcelled off and let in allotments to labourers at a moderate rental. Near Eye, upon the estate of Sir Edward Kerrison, the allotment system has been carried out still more largely, and with the happiest results. Out of 281 cottages, the occupants of 233 have allotments, besides an average of about 20 rods of garden attached to the cottage. The exceptional cases in which the cottagers have no allotments are generally those of widows or infirm people, unable to till the ground. Sir Edward Kerrison, however, does not restrict the allotments to his cottagers or to the labourers employed by his tenantry. Any men of

good character, and in some cases lads of 17 or 18, who desire to cultivate a plot of land, and who live near enough the estate to be able to do so, may have allotments. The privilege is highly valued, and seldom, if ever, abused. More than 400 allotments, averaging a quarter of an acre, are thus let, at a rent of 10s. a quarter of an acre. The landlord pays tithe and rates, so that his net rental is 7s. 6d. a quarter of an acre, or 30s. an acre. The land is of good quality, and is well cultivated by the labourers, who give the agent little trouble, pay their rent regularly, and work with all the zest which peasants as well as other people feel when they are working for themselves. The farmers do not complain that their work is neglected by the allotment holders. As to the men themselves, I saw enough of them to confirm in every point the opinion that there exists no better means of attaching the labourer to his employer, of sweetening his toil and making him contented with his position, than by giving him a comfortable cottage and satisfying his craving for a bit of land.

In many respects an allotment held by the labourer at a moderate rent is far better for him than a small freehold, bought at an extravagant price, subject to legal charges for conveyance out of all proportion to its value, mortgaged to the hilt as such a possession often is, and liable to be foreclosed or sold at a disadvantage upon the owner's death. I did not find here any ground for an objection sometimes urged in the labourers' interest against the allotment system, that the farmers make use of it as a means of keeping wages low. The best way of meeting this objection would be for the landowners to do as is done here—let the land directly to the labourers; and any little trouble their agents may have in dealing with a

multitude of tenants instead of with one is surely repaid by the gratitude of the labourer and the visible improvement in his physical and moral condition. The 400 labourers who hold allotments around Oakley make far more out of their hundred acres than a single farmer would make, and the surplus produce left after paying their £2 a-year in rent, so far from serving as a pretext for reducing wages, is a direct addition to income, as it ought to be—a reward of extra industry, and of the odd hours spent by them and their families upon the land. They have the sense of proprietorship without its inconveniences. The occupation often keeps them out of the beershop, and fills up time which would otherwise be spent in idleness or worse. They can better afford to let their children go to school instead of beginning farm-work over-young. They have a new interest in life ; and one fancies, if, indeed, it be fancy, that one can trace the result of this quasi-proprietorship in the franker, freer bearing, the greater manliness of the men, as well as in a higher moral level. Here, as everywhere, the men are fond of beer, and drink too much of it. But habitual drunkards are excessively rare, and I believe the allotment system may be fairly credited with an important influence in maintaining sobriety and self-respect among the labourers. The practical working of the system on this large scale around Oakley deserves the most careful study by other large landowners, and, I think, would amply justify them in following the example set by Sir Edward Kerrison. The extent of each holding is a point upon which there may be a difference of opinion. Here, though the average is a quarter of an acre, some of the holdings, of course, exceed this measurement. Elsewhere they have sometimes averaged half an acre. I have heard objections taken

by some farmers to allotments of a size which may take the labourer off the farm at a time when, perhaps, he is most wanted there. "He must not forget that I am the farmer and he is the labourer," as a strong advocate of allotments said to me; "he must have enough land to till in his spare hours, but not enough to make him an indifferent labourer outside his allotment and an indifferent farmer upon it." Another point is that the rent must be moderate. I have felt grieved at times to hear of the high rents exacted from the labourers, and paid by them rather than have no land at all. It is also important that the land should be as near the cottage as possible. Lastly, I do not think there should be any restriction upon the crop grown. Some farmers object to pig-keeping, because the men may be tempted to steal food for their pigs; and others object to the growth of cereals on allotments, because of the temptation to add to the corn of the cottage from the farmer's store. No such restriction exists upon the Oakley and Brome property, and I hear of no complaint made by the farmers on this score.

It should be added that the allotments here are measured so as to be free from waste-land, and that, in addition to the 409 allotments, there are 45 holdings of from 2 to 20 acres. The consolidation of small into large farms, as I said, has not made much way in this district. But the process is inevitable, and will be quickened by all difficulties in procuring manual labour which set the farmer upon the substitution of machinery. If, however, small farms are to disappear from the face of the country, the labourer's prospect of bettering himself becomes much narrowed. There are many instances in this district in which the labouring man has raised himself to the farmer class by

means of small holdings. But what will be his chance of doing so when hedgerows are thrown down, fields are joined to fields, and farms of 50 or 100 acres give place to *minimum* holdings of 500 or 600 acres, with steam-cultivation, and requiring a *minimum* capital of £5000 or £6000? If the peasant is not to be alienated entirely from the soil, the allotment system will then become necessary; and, happily, it has not to be invented.

The cottages at Stradbroke are tolerably good. Most of them are built of timber framework filled up with sun-burnt clay and plaster; and I did not hear of any house in the parish with less than two sleeping-rooms where there was a family of children. Large sums have been spent from year to year in rebuilding and improving the cottages upon Sir Edward Kerrison's estate, and they now let for an average rent of £3, 10s., including about 20 rods of garden. The landlord pays the rates. An excellent plan is adopted on this property to prevent over-crowding. A register is kept of the inmates in each cottage. When a birth or death occurs, or a girl goes to service, or a lad migrates to the town, a corresponding entry is made. Of course, such a register gives trouble; but it brings landowner or agent into close personal relations with the cottagers, keeps up a lively interest in them, and when children grow up or multiply, a hint can be given that a larger cottage must be wanted. Under such a system of supervision, cottages of different sizes are made to hold the number of inmates for which each is suited, and no more. But in the absence of this watchfulness on the part of the landowners, over-crowding seems inevitable. Hitherto the sanitary inspectors in Suffolk, and I believe in other rural districts, have acted upon the belief that they are not empowered to interfere unless

lodgers are taken, and that over-crowding within the meaning of the Sanitary Acts does not apply to the family of the occupier. I hear that in the opinion of the Local Government Board such a construction is not a sound one. What this view of the law has led to, however, will be best gathered from the following statistics, referring to eight parishes in the Hoxne Union: In Mendham there are six cottages, each with two bedrooms, and the number of inmates respectively is 10, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 10. In Withersdale, three cottages, each with two bedrooms, contain 8, 9, and 11 inmates. In Metfield there are nine cottages with two bedrooms apiece, and the number of persons living there is 9, 8, 8, 10, 8, 8, 10, 8, and 8. I am sorry to add that there are two cottages with only one bedroom apiece, in each of which 9 persons sleep. I do not know the ages of the children, but at the best such over-crowding is deplorable.

In Bedingfield also there is a cottage with a single bedroom with 9 inmates, and five cottages with two bedrooms each, where the occupiers number respectively 8, 8, 12, 9, and 8. In Worlingworth there are seven cottages having two bedrooms, each cottage having 8 persons residing there, and two cottages with only one bedroom and 8 inmates each. In Stradbroke, as I have said, all the cottages where there are children possess two bedrooms, and, taking fourteen of these cottages, I find nine with 8 inmates, two with 9, two with 11, and one with 13. In Wilby, three cottages with two bedrooms apiece have 9 inmates. In Fressingfield, out of thirteen cottages inhabited by families, and having two bedrooms, five are occupied by 8 people, six by 9 people, one by 10, and one by 11.

At Maypole Green there are cottages with only one bedroom, and in wretched plight. I was misdirected in trying to find this hamlet, but heard enough of it to convince me that, in spite of its pretty, playful name, Arcadia is not to be sought for there. In one bedroom, 15 ft. by 9 ft., are crowded a man and his wife, two lads (of whom the eldest is seventeen), four girls (the eldest ten), and a baby of two. "In the next cottage" (I quote from a description supplied by the correspondent of a Suffolk newspaper—the 'Mercury') "a labourer, his wife, her father, and three children occupy the one sleeping-room. Next to that a labourer, his wife, her father, and four children sleep in one room. Then comes the roadman's cottage, with his wife and five children. Thus, no fewer than twenty-nine persons are crowded into four bedrooms at night." Lord Stradbroke has cottages in this parish, but each has two bedrooms, and all are in good repair.

At Brundish, on the borders of Dennington parish, I stopped to inquire the way at a cottage by the side of the road, and here is a picture of what I saw. The thatch was sadly out of repair, and the next heavy downpour, after so much dry weather, would certainly find its way through it. There was one living-room, and in its way nothing could be more cleanly or comfortable. The walls, neatly papered, were hung with engravings; the man was smoking his pipe; his wife, a respectable, intelligent woman, was busy about household work. There was but one bedroom; and, as no children were about, it seemed that one bedroom might do very well for an elderly married couple. Might I see the bedroom? Yes. It was 12 or 13 feet square; and I was astonished to see the

floor covered by four beds, which all but touched each other. Then the truth came out. In this one room slept the labourer and his wife, a daughter aged twenty-four, and a son aged twenty-one, another son of nineteen, a boy of fourteen, and a girl of seven. The eldest daughter had been in service, but had just returned in ill-health. A well-conducted girl she must have been, for she had lived four or five years in her place; and it was to such a home she had returned. The mother had tried to obtain for her a recommendation as an in-door patient of the hospital at Ipswich, where the physician thought he could cure her, but the recommendation could not be got, "for there were no gentry thereabouts to give one." In this cottage, where the rain would by-and-by trickle in upon the four beds stretched upon the one floor, James Burgess had lived for twenty-eight years; and his wife had borne him thirteen children, of whom five had died, and five, as you have heard, were now at home. Thirteen births and five deaths in this one little chamber! Such a fact, and all that it conveys, speaks for itself but too plainly. I will make no comments on it. "Who owns your cottage?" I asked. "It is let to us by Farmer Capon," was the reply; "but it belongs to the Earl of Stradbroke. Like enough, though, Lord Stradbroke doesn't know he has such a cottage on his estate." Certainly not, we may be sure *—a cottage with one bed-

* This surmise proved correct; and, in justice to Lord Stradbroke, the following letter should be given. It is dated "Henham, May 30," and is addressed to the editor of the 'Times':—

"My attention has been called to an article written by your special reporter, on the subject of cottage dwellings in Suffolk, where my name is prominently brought forward. Maypole Green is a part of Dennington parish, the whole being about 3200 acres, half of which

room, in which sleep seven people, of whom two women and three men are adults. Carefully framed and hung among the engravings down-stairs was the following certificate:—

“Suffolk Agricultural Association (established 1831), for the aid and advancement of agriculture, for the encouragement of skill, industry, and good conduct among cottage servants and labourers in husbandry, and for the excitement of enterprise and emulation among the owners and occupiers of land.—Patron, the Right Hon. the Earl of Stradbroke, Lord Lieutenant of the county.—This is to certify that a prize of £2 was awarded to James Burgess on the 27th day of June 1873, for having served as horse-

belongs to me. After stating that Lord Stradbroke has cottages in this parish (each has two bedrooms, and all are in good repair), he proceeds to relate what he observed in Brundish, and as regards my cottage inhabited by James Burgess his remarks are mainly correct. A small part of my Dennington estate runs into Brundish, and about two and a half years since, the field, containing eight acres, on which this cottage stands, was sold by auction. I purchased it for two reasons. First, it was entirely surrounded by my land; secondly, because it was sold by my ancestor in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, as the enclosed paper will indicate. Only last week I went purposely to Dennington to inspect farm-buildings and cottages; and after ordering a cottage to be unroofed, and having since determined to expend £65 in repairing it, I proceeded within 200 yards of Burgess's dwelling; but being told by my tenant that nothing was required there, I did not go further in that direction—in fact, I have never seen it. My land-steward and head-carpenter inspected it yesterday, and have made their report to me this morning. I should say that Brundish is seventeen miles from Henham. All that your special reporter stated about James Burgess is strictly correct; and his wife is a remarkably clean and tidy woman. It appears that this double cottage was originally one dwelling; but the late owner, to increase his rent, divided it, and hence all the discomfort. Burgess, unfortunately, works on an adjacent farm, and not with my tenant. His sick daughter lately returned home; I hope to get her soon into the

driver thirty-six years upon the same farm, or with the same master or mistress.—Right Hon. Lord Rendlesham, President and Chairman.”

Thus the occupier of the cottage was no idler or man of indifferent character. He was a steady, industrious English peasant; and his wife was evidently a hard-working woman, who had tried to bring up her children decently, and to make the best of things. It may no doubt be said that the case is exceptional, and that you must not found upon it any general charge of overcrowding in the villages of the district. The figures already quoted, however, do not quite sustain this plea; and apart from them one cannot help suspecting that when one lights quite by chance upon such an instance as this, on a main road, more must remain behind, and that rosy-tinted pictures of rustic happiness among these villagers are not quite trustworthy. Perhaps, though, the man was to blame. So I said, “Surely with your wages and your sons’ you could afford to rent a larger cottage?” Both husband and wife answered at once how glad they would be to get a better cottage if one was hospital at Ipswich. The two grown-up sons are able to earn good wages, and ought to be in lodgings. There are two empty cottages near. I should like to remove one of the tenants, and restore the house to a single dwelling. This is difficult. Burgess, having lived there twenty-eight years, is unwilling to move; the other man is a faithful servant of my tenant, who would be unwilling to remove him, and also to lose £3, 10s. rent. I find that the whole can be made comfortable and commodious for one family at a small expense. This case is a great card for the radical and democratic press. I request you to believe that, so far from finding fault with your reporter, I thank him, and can add that his letters published, as regards dwellings in Suffolk, are very true statements. It only remains for me to offer an apology for requesting so large a space in your valuable paper. I never ask for quarter in any act of mine, either on my Suffolk or Waterford properties.”

to be had ; but they could hire no more roomy or decent one in the parish. There were four cottages in a row, of which three were empty, about a mile off, at Brundish Crown ; but these also had only a single living-room and bedroom, smaller than theirs. I verified this statement afterwards by visiting the fourth, which was only just large enough for its inmates—a widow woman and her little daughter. The cottage occupied by Burgess had about 20 rods of garden, and for this two-roomed cottage (he had no allotment) he paid £3, 5s. a-year. There is no school at Brundish. The youngest girl, a rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed little one, nicely dressed, and a pink of neatness and cleanliness, came trotting in from a dame's school ; but I gathered that she went there to be out of the way rather than with much hope of learning.

At Wilby a school-house has but lately been built ; and in this village I came upon a bad case of destitution and overcrowding. The cottage had one bedroom and one living-room. There was hardly a scrap of furniture in either, and very little bedding. Two small mattresses stretched upon the floor of a dirty, loft-like, unpapered room, served as the only sleeping accommodation for eight people—the man and his wife, a daughter aged sixteen, a boy of twelve, three girls, nine, five, and three years old, and a baby of twelve months. The bedroom was about 12 ft. by 9 ft., and not much more than 7 ft. high. Downstairs the woman, wretchedly clad, was trying to heat her oven with what looked like half-green wood which strewed the brick floor. The children were dirty, and in rags. "Do they go to school?" I asked. "No ; for they have no clothes to go in." "Is there no clothing-club in the village?" "Yes ; but I have no money to pay into it."

The man was a labourer earning 13s. a-week when at work, but he was not regularly employed. For the cottage a rent of £4, 10s. a-year was paid, and the inducement to occupy so wretched an abode was a half-acre allotment annexed to it. There may be faults in the man or woman which would explain the destitution of the family; but the overcrowding should have been looked to: and one would think it was somebody's concern to see that the children went to school, and that the woman (who had been ill) was able to clothe them decently.

In a town the effects of such overcrowding would have shown themselves in pallid, sickly faces among the children. These, on the contrary, were rosy, chubby, hardy-looking youngsters, pictures of health, and blissfully indifferent to dirt and raggedness. It was like flying in the face of Nature, and being healthy and happy-looking in spite of her. These cottages with one bedroom have their uses. It is an economy to build them, and they do well enough for two old people or a married couple without children. When the worst is told of them, they are no more unhealthy, and in some points are much more healthy, than the bedrooms in large towns, into which whole families are sometimes huddled. At Wilby, too, there are some small owners, of whom the old story has to be told, that they possess an unremunerative property and have no sufficient inducement to improve it. But cottages upon large estates, on which paternal or "confidential" relations are supposed to exist, ought to be better looked after. The difficulty in which sanitary inspectors and parochial officers are placed is considerable. Where a cottage is in such bad repair as to be unfit for human habitation, they may interfere; but the owner is often a

person without the means of putting it into good order, and perhaps no better cottage is available in the parish. The same reason applies in the case of a family who have outgrown their cottage. The labourer may be willing enough to rent a bigger one ; but he cannot build, or make other people build, for his accommodation. Under such circumstances it is a mockery for parochial officers to tell him that his family is too large and his cottage too small. "Can you find me a better cottage? If so, I am ready to pay for it." Such an answer is not to be gainsaid.

CHAPTER VIII.

REMARKS ON COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION CONTINUED—PREFERENCE FOR THE VILLAGE—HOME-CLINGING—SQUATTERS—HENHAM—THE STRADBROKE ESTATE—VILLAGE WATER-SUPPLY—SUFFOLK PEAS-ANTRY—THEIR TIDY HOMES—THEIR CIVILITY—HOME BAKING AND BREWING—THE MALT-TAX—COTTAGES AND GARDENS—RENT—ALLOTMENTS—PRIZES FOR GARDEN AND ALLOTMENT CULTIVATION—SCHOOL—COAL AND CLOTHING CLUBS—LORD RENDLES-HAM'S ESTATE—ALLOTMENTS, SITUATION OF—COTTAGES—LODGERS—DECENT DWELLINGS—NOT ALWAYS APPRECIATED—PIG-KEEPING—SANITARY PRECAUTIONS—COTTAGE PROPERTY UNREMUNERATIVE—INSTANCE OF—EXTRA EARNINGS—HIRINGS WET OR DRY—OLD TIMES—TOWN AND COUNTRY—RENTS IN, CONTRASTED—RURAL COMFORTS AND ADVANTAGES—RELUCTANCE TO FORFEIT THEM.

I MADE it my business to see as much as possible of the cottage accommodation provided in East Suffolk, and, on the whole, can speak very favourably of it. Of course it is not perfection, and much has yet to be done. It would be in the highest degree unjust, however, to ignore what has been done in improving the homes of the labourers here, and no doubt in other counties; and as I have freely described the bad cottages that came in my way, it will be fair to give equal prominence to some of the good ones. In East as in West Suffolk, the worst cottages, the highest-rented, and the most out of repair, belong to people of small means, who have been tempted—they or their fathers before them—to buy such property,

perhaps to live in, perhaps as an investment, and who now cling to it as an outward token of respectability, though they have long since found how unremunerative it is. Under existing social conditions, cottages in the country are even a greater luxury than land; and as long as labourers rarely or ever pay an adequate rent for them, they will be avoided by prudent men as an investment, and will continue for the most part an appanage of large estates. But given even good cottages, it does not always follow that they are fully appreciated. I have heard of cases in which families have deliberately preferred less commodious dwellings, and farther off the man's work, because they were asked to leave the village. Perhaps the woman disliked to lose her chance of village gossip, and the man may have preferred to be nearer the ale-house. Such a preference for society is quite natural. Man was not born to live alone, nor woman either. But the landowner or farmer cannot always gratify this preference for the village; and another difficulty arises, for though, perhaps, both the landowner and the farmer would like to give an allotment to the labourer who inhabits a cottage in the village, the small tradesman, or other owner, no sooner hears of such an allotment than he treats it as an annex to the cottage, the rent of which is raised accordingly. Another difficulty is that people, especially old people, often prefer the cottage in which they have lived to any new one. It is the home-clinging which in another form makes so many of them loath to leave the village, even with fair prospects of doing better elsewhere. Anyhow, they sometimes make a trouble of leaving it, and entreat that they may not be put into another cottage, though it may be a better one at as low a rent as they have always been paying. Near one

village in the Woodbridge district I saw a group of wretched hovels which had been built by squatters on a strip of roadside land. Bit by bit the squatter had made his advances ; and you might see there the process of encroachment in pretty nearly all its stages — fagot walls, mud walls, wood, thatch, and reeds ; until, made hardy because it was worth nobody's while to dispute his right, his descendant to-day ventured upon flint-stone or brick, and could show a sufficiently good title by length of occupation. After negotiating for some time, a gentleman who wished to improve these hovels off the face of the village came to terms with the owners, and better cottages will be built for the occupiers ; but it was made a condition that one of them should not be disturbed, and so this man will continue to enjoy his ease in his hut, without a scrap of garden, and will not allow anybody to give him a healthier, roomier dwelling.

Near Halesworth, a market-town of small pretensions, lies the home estate of the Earl of Stradbroke. Avoiding "show" cottages, and confining my visits as far as possible to ordinary dwellings of farm-labourers in the villages forming part of the Stradbroke estate, I am able to say that the peasantry here are most comfortably housed, and appear also to live in what at all events looks like comfort. I saw, and could hear of, no cottage without two bedrooms where there was a family. Of course, the size of the bedrooms is not always what one could wish. In a row of cottages at Sotherton Corner the second bedroom was little bigger than a closet ; and one woman told me that in this house she had given birth to and reared nine children. They were grown up and dispersed now, and how she had managed to bring up so many in so confined

a space she herself could hardly tell. One must expect to hear of such cases ; and it is right to add that Lord Stradbroke only came into possession of these cottages three or four years ago. One crying want, not only here but all through the district, was water. The dry season aggravated the natural difficulties of the village water-supply probably in every part of these islands, and landowners are bound to improve it. At Sotherton Corner the people had been supplied from a neighbouring pond ; but this was now dry, and the water had to be fetched from another pond a quarter of a mile off. A well is being sunk here, and will have to be carried to a depth of 70 feet. Meanwhile one would be inclined to say that cleanliness was impossible, and health in some danger, when this first necessity was so hard to obtain. But the people were healthy ; and these and the other cottages visited were no exception to the scrupulous cleanliness which distinguishes the homes of the Suffolk peasantry beyond any I have ever visited. In every case I took the people by surprise, and came upon them at all times. But, with rare exceptions, there seems to be an instinctive tidiness and cleanliness about them which keeps their cottages patterns of what a village home should be and may be. It is just as rare also not to find, both among the men and the women, a cheerful civility ; and their decent dress, the substantial furniture of their living-rooms, and the round, rosy faces of the children, seem hardly compatible with very short commons or great privations. That you are a complete stranger does not matter. You are not even a tract distributor—and it is impossible to imagine a much slighter claim upon their confidence. But they heard “this Union” had made some gentlefolk curious to see

how poor people live, so they frankly show you all. Here in the Stradbroke cottages, as in those in other parts of Suffolk, a most fragrant, appetising smell often attacks you. It is the smell of new bread, baked in the cottager's brick oven with a wood fire; and you see a tempting array of the whitest loaves, made from the very best flour—which goes farthest, they say. Fate could not harm man, woman, or child who had a meal off such bread, with a bit of the cheese or the bacon one sees displayed in the pantry—a spacious, airy place, which would delight the heart of many a town housekeeper paying rent to the amount of £40 or £50 yearly. Less fragrance arises from the onions, which are so favourite an article of the labourer's diet. They stay the stomach and sweeten the blood, he thinks, besides being most acceptable aids to appetite. Then there is the beer. In Suffolk almost every cottager brews at home; and the Stradbroke peasantry, like their neighbours, have a copper in which to brew, and a cool place in which to keep casks not destined to remain full long. I am not prepared to make an affidavit that the product is exactly nectar. However, experience enables me to bear witness that throughout Suffolk the peasant has a beer-cellar, and that the malt-tax comes straight to it. Hereabouts they grow the best barley in England—in the world, as enthusiastic farmers insist. The labourer who tills the soil, sows the seed, and gathers in the bearded crop, has a natural affinity for this wine of the country, and loves to drink it in its native purity. A tyrannical Government, however, steps in and imposes ever such a high duty, by reason of which the labourer can only afford "small," thin potations, so diluted as to be an outrage on malt and hops. The labourer tells you this in other words,

with an impatience of taxation which may be ignorant, but undoubtedly is sincere. He goes to the maltster and buys a bushel of malt for 10s. 6d. A pound of hops, at 2s., gives pleasant bitterness. A bushel of coals, costing 1s. 9d., must be burnt before the goodness of either is extracted. Then comes the water, and the cottager's grievance is that there must be so much water. In moderation—when it comes from the pump, not from the pond—there is nothing to be said against this ingredient; but in cottage brewing it is thrown in by the pailful. From each bushel of malt the careful wife reckons to make about ten "pails" of three gallons each, so that upon the figures just given 30 gallons would cost about 14s. But the husband grieves that so much has to come from so little, and blames the malt-tax which deprives him of strength and quality.

One house on the Stradbroke estate had been spoken of by a Union delegate as having its windows boarded up, and as being presumably, therefore, dilapidated and unfit for human habitation. I found the house had been an inn—the Crossbow—and was being turned into three excellent roomy cottages, which, when I visited them, were almost finished. The delegate, like other people, was mistaken, and in this instance had made an uncommonly bad shot, for better habitations for labouring men it would be hard to find. These, like all the other cottages I saw, had their gardens, and ample gardens too. I believe there are 125 small tenements upon Lord Stradbroke's estate, each of them having a garden varying in extent from 5 to 20 rods, the majority containing more than 10 rods. The rent of the greater number of these cottages and gardens is under £4. Then there are, in addition, 64 allotments

portioned off among the cottagers, 4 of these allotments being of 1 rood each, let at £1 apiece, and 60 of 20 rods each, let at 5s. apiece. Both gardens and allotments are in high cultivation, and a stimulus for good cropping is given every year by two or three local societies founded for the purpose under the patronage of Lord and Lady Stradbroke. The "Henham Cottage Garden Society" offers small prizes to labourers residing in Henham, Wangford, Reydon, Walderswick, Blythburgh, Bulcamp, Uggeshall, Sotherton, or Frostenden, for the neatest and best-cropped cottage-garden, for the best-cropped allotment, and the cottage-window best arranged with plants. Gentlemen's gardeners and servants and tradesmen are very properly classed separately, and have distinct prizes. Then, in the Blything Hundred there is a society which holds an annual show of vegetables and fruit, and awards about 20 guineas to the occupiers of garden and cottage allotments for the best potatoes, onions, carrots, parsnips, cabbages, pumpkins, apples, pears, and garden herbs grown under spade husbandry, and for honey in the comb. Special industrial prizes are also given by this society for the best specimens of sewing, darning, and knitting by married women and girls under 14. There is a similar show confined to garden and allotment occupiers in Henham, Wangford, Reydon, and Bulcamp; and besides the prizes for vegetables and fruit, Lady Stradbroke offers prizes for the best geraniums and fuchsias in pots, and for cut-flowers. In all these cases the prizes are small; but great emulation is excited among the villagers, and the women become as anxious as the men for good gardening and the growth of good sorts of vegetables. One woman told me she had made 30s. by prizes; her next-door neighbour

thought she had made 50s. out of the three societies ; but they or their husbands were no doubt exceptionally clever cultivators. Paternal relations with the farmer and landowner may be a good or a bad thing for the labourer. At all events, these relations exist ; and in other ways I find the labourer looked after here. There is a handsome school for Henham and Wangford built by Lord and Lady Stradbroke, and liberally supported by them. Another school is at Reydon, which has a clothing club ; while Wangford and Henham have both coal and clothing clubs. To all these, of course, the Hall subscribes its share. But for recent controversy, it might hardly be worth while to mention these village charities. They are incidents, however, of most villages which have a great house for their neighbour, and must take their place as illustrating generally the benefits which village society, as it is now constituted, yields to the labourers.

I found the pig an almost invariable part of the cottage surroundings upon Lord Stradbroke's estate, as in other parts of the county. "You must go and see our two pigs," said one woman ; "they are some of our best friends." Indeed, they help to pay the rent, or furnish forth the table ; and what is more, they yield the necessary manure for the garden or allotment. Around Henham, too, as in most other Suffolk villages, the sties are sufficiently far away from the house not to become a nuisance. Care is taken also to place the outhouses and conveniences at a reasonable distance from the cottage—a point of great sanitary importance, which contributes in a great measure no doubt to the healthy looks of both children and adults, and explains the reason why, even with imperfect water-supply, the villages hereabouts are rarely, if ever, attacked by

typhoid fever or other such epidemic. The nominal wages here, as elsewhere, take no account of under-rented cottages, with their gardens or allotments,—cottages like some of those I saw around Henham, with three bedrooms, a good washhouse, a comfortable living-room or parlour, besides larder, oven for bread-making, copper for beer-brewing, woodhouse, outhouse, and piggery—all for less than £5 a-year. I have often spoken of the unprofitable nature of such property. A good illustration is supplied by the row of cottages at Sotherton Corner. When they came into Lord Stradbroke's possession three or four years ago, it was found necessary to spend over £200 in providing them with the necessary outhouses and conveniences, and in making the best of them. When this was done, and a nice garden-plot annexed to each cottage, a town landlord looking for a reasonable return on capital expended would have thought himself quite entitled to raise the rent. But in this case additional outlay upon the cottages meant reduced rental. The old proprietor received £5 yearly; the new owner, after making them more habitable, thought they were not worth more than £4; and, relatively to other cottages on the estate, they are certainly not worth more.

On Lord Rendlesham's estate, near Woodbridge, I found just as little evidence that at any recent period in their history Suffolk labourers picked snails from the hedges and cooked them for dinner, or drank nettle-tea, except medicinally. The labourers' cottages I inspected may compare with any in Suffolk for comfort and accommodation. A pair were pointed out to me at Butley Abbey which were built of red brick and had cost £340, though built by contract. These had three bedrooms, opening from a landing, and

having in this way the advantage of privacy at a small sacrifice of space. In some even of the newer cottages elsewhere the bedrooms lead into one another. At Butley Abbey the out-buildings comprise a common oven for bread-making, with woodhouse and offices for each cottage. Twelve pounds a-year apiece for these cottages, with the gardens annexed, would be reckoned a most moderate rental near a town. The farmer let his men have them rent-free. Like all the other cottages I saw here, the boards were as white and everything as clean as much scrubbing and rubbing would make them, and rude plenty reigned in the pantry. Upon the Rendlesham estate there are 286 cottages, of which 249 have gardens, while the number of distinct allotments is 597. The rent of the cottages and gardens varies from £2, 12s. to £4, 10s. a-year, according to size of cottage and quantity of ground attached to it. The allotments range from 20 to 40 rods, and are let at a rental of about 34s. an acre. All outgoings in respect of the cottages, gardens, and allotments are paid by the owner; and it will be understood, of course, that the majority of the cottagers hold an allotment in addition to their garden. Where the garden is big enough, it is easier than an allotment to cultivate; for the labourer has it at his door, and can give it every moment of leisure in the interval of showers and otherwise. This is not always possible in the case of allotments, which cannot be conveniently placed for all cottages alike, or be made equally accessible. Upon all estates, large or small, the difficulty of making some farm-labourers appreciate the advantages of decent dwellings is a matter of complaint. It is an evident economy to build cottages with one bedroom, which suit old people, and are large enough for

young married people. But families increase, and close watching is needed to prevent overcrowding. People will take lodgers even where they have not too much room for their own families. Better education will teach these persons the value of more decent living and less crowded homes. I believe the number who appreciate such homes is largely increasing. Meanwhile it is fair to point out that the difficulties in the way of properly lodging our agricultural labourers are not all on one side.

Two or three of the cottages on a farm I visited near Bury St Edmunds were let at 52s. and £3 a-year, including gardens, and were so roomy, neat, and comfortable, that it was a pleasure to see them. One can easily understand how it is that men used to the cleanliness and comfort of such homes were loath to leave them, and after a short experience in the northern towns were glad to get back again. At 52s. or £3 a-year, cottages with one or two living-rooms, and at least two bedrooms, are of course greatly under-rented. One labourer had a little orchard with his cottage, and the produce of the fruit-trees alone paid his rent. All the men had small allotments free of rent, and upon these they generally grew potatoes for the supply of their families. At harvest-time they would make £8 or £9 apiece for a month's work. Then there are other extras. Beer is provided at threshing-time, hay-cutting, and harvest-time. During the sheep-washing the men are fed as well as kept in beer. They get extra money when sheep-shearing, and at other times. In short, the nominal wages here and elsewhere are quite delusive; nor is it easy to come upon instances in which farmers of the better sort make deductions for wet days. The small farmers occasionally hire upon this system, but

I believe it is exceptional in this district even with them. The advantage of a three months', six months', or yearly hiring would be, that good labourers would be protected, as they ought to be, from loss of pay at such times, and would be kept in steady work throughout the year at the stipulated wage. The farmer showed me his labour-book, extending over thirty years,* and the fluctuations in wages there recorded gave proof that if the labourer has seen better times he must also have seen worse. I had some talk on this point with two of the labourers on the farm. One of them had come here in 1851 from a neighbouring parish, where he was receiving 7s. a-week. At that time he was married and had two children. He paid for his cottage 2s. 4d. a-week; schooling, 3d. a-week; clothing club, 3d. a-week; benefit club, 5d. a-week. When these fixed payments were made, he had 3s. 9d. left for food out of his 7s. But his wife used to earn on an average 2s. a-week by field-work. "How did you live in those days?" "Mostly on rye-bread," was the answer. But then came better years, with higher wages, when it was possible to buy a breast of mutton at 4d. a-pound or less, while now a labouring man with a family was hard put to it to get a bit of meat into his house. The other man recollected times when half the labourers or more used to be on the parish at one time or other during the year; when men were hung for incendiary fires; and the single men used to be paid a shilling a-week less wages than the married men, though they might be better workers. The natural result was a premium upon early improvident marriages; and the labourer with whom I talked shyly

* See p. 317.

owned that he had married, as many other young fellows did, chiefly with a view to the extra shilling.

It may be useful here to contrast the low average rents of £3 or £4 paid for the cottages of farm-labourers, including gardens, with the rents paid by labouring men in the larger towns. I quote from a private letter sent to a Suffolk village by a person residing in South London, and thoroughly acquainted with the condition of the labouring population both there and in Suffolk. He says :—

“Within a two miles’ radius of this spot (a street in Southwark), a front room 12 feet square would let for 4s. a-week ; a back room 8 feet or 9 feet square would be about 2s. 6d. to 3s. A small house in courts and places with no thoroughfare, containing four rooms about 7 feet square, would let for from 6s. 6d. to 8s. 6d. weekly. These places are in closely-packed neighbourhoods, where the clouds are only to be seen as you put your head out of the window. A labourer with 21s. per week, and two children, must pay for one front room 4s. a-week—£10 8s. per annum. The washing and all domestic things must be done in the one room, and the clothes dried there. Again, suppose—which is often the case—a drunken, noisy family is living in the room above and keeps late hours. A man goes home tired to his one room, wanting sleep. He will soon wish himself back in the country. In some places there is only one closet for five or six families, some of whom are very dirty people.”

Speaking of very large works in South London in which unskilled labour is employed, the writer says in another letter :—

"They now find it very difficult to get young men from the country to work for them at 21s. a-week. Till within the last two or three years country young men were constantly hanging about the gate for a job. London labourers make overtime; hence the reason they appear so much better off than country people. What is the result? A jaded, worn-out frame, and a short life. Men die at 45 instead of 65. I speak within limits when I say that hundreds of country people have told me 'I wish I had never left the country; I had a great many more comforts when there.' Here, not one poor person out of six has a cooking-stove. The meat must be boiled or sent to the bake-house. Very few mechanics have more than two rooms. To have three rooms a man must be very careful and steady. Taking all things, I think London is cheaper than the country for living (food). But a London labourer has no garden to grow vegetables. All must be bought."

The agricultural labourer is not so foolish as he is sometimes represented; and these details of town life, along with the garden, the cottage, the allotment, and the fresh air and healthy occupation of village life, help to explain the reason why it is so hard to get him to leave the village, and why the National Union Executive were forced to warn locked-out members that such of them as had work provided for them at higher wages in the North of England would forfeit the Union allowance unless they left their villages and took this work. As their railway fare was paid for them, and they were guaranteed a specified wage of a guinea or 24s. a-week, their reluctance to go from home must have arisen in great part from a feeling that they might be worse off than they were at home.

This dread of change is not altogether confined to the class of farm-labourers, for the farmer himself grumbles but stays on—complains that he is getting only 7 or 8 per cent upon his capital, but will not withdraw it or invest it in other ways. The labourer probably feels it still harder to adapt himself to fresh social conditions.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SHAFTESBURY PARK ESTATE—RENTALS THERE—ADVANTAGES OF OCCUPIERS—FARM-LABOURERS' COTTAGES CONTRASTED—COST OF CONSTRUCTION—RETURN TO LANDLORD—COTTAGE RENTALS SHOULD BE REMUNERATIVE—UNDER-RENTED COTTAGES—A SUPPLEMENT TO WAGES—PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION—CONTRIBUTED BY LANDOWNER OR FARMER?—DILAPIDATED COTTAGES—RESULT OF INADEQUATE RENTALS—ANOMALOUS RELATIONS CAUSED BY, BETWEEN LANDOWNER, FARMER, AND LABOURER—INEQUALITY OF SYSTEM AS IT AFFECTS LABOURERS—IMPROVED COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION—BEST MEANS OF PROVIDING—COTTAGE BUILDING—ISOLATED DWELLINGS—DISADVANTAGE OF.

THE 'Times' of July 20, 1874, contained a description of the houses built for working men upon the Shaftesbury Park estate at Lavender Hill, in the south of London; and much interest was felt in that description by people in the Eastern Counties, who were also interested as landlords or employers in the homes of farm-labourers. At Lavender Hill there are houses of four classes. Those of the lowest and cheapest class, which need alone be mentioned here, contain five rooms, and the weekly rental charged for them is 5s. 9d., including rates and taxes. Now it was naturally observed by Suffolk people that these houses are no bigger than many of the new cottages which have of late years been built for the East Anglian peasantry. Yet 2s. a-week (which would also include rates and taxes) would

be thought a high rent for the peasant's cottage, including a garden which would grow enough potatoes, cabbages, and other vegetables to supply the family for a great part of the year. Having seen the Lavender Hill houses, and visited in all parts of Suffolk three-bedroomed cottages of the same class, I can speak of their relative merits with some confidence. The town houses have the advantage of gas and water (though these, of course, involve extra payment), drainage, and air-valves which secure a free ventilation in every room. The tenants also enjoy the benefit of nearness to schools, a lecture-hall, and shops or a co-operative store, where the marketing can be done cheaply and quickly. On the other hand, most of the inhabitants of the Shaftesbury Park estate must travel to and from their work by means of the neighbouring suburban railways; and the weekly fare, even at workmen's rates, represents a substantial addition to rental, with a further liability to double or treble rates if the railway directors for the time being are dissatisfied with imperial legislation. Now for the cottages which may fairly be contrasted with these suburban dwellings. They are not few in number; they are numerous. I heartily wish they were more numerous, but the number is increasing. The wonder is that, with the inadequate rentals they yield, they should increase at all. As a rule, then, the rooms of these cottages are no smaller than the rooms at Lavender Hill. They are generally built in pairs, with a common oven in an outhouse in the rear, where the bread is baked; and in homes where by far the largest expenditure is for bread, this convenience, and the invariable habit of using it, count for a considerable economy. Close by the common oven is a copper used for brewing. Here again is an

opening for a small economy not within the reach of dwellers in towns, who contribute to the profits of brewers, publicans, and bakers. On either side of the little bakery and brewery is a woodhouse. The loaves are generally baked with wood fuel, and are thought all the sweeter when so produced. We may be sure that brushwood for fire-kindling will be another small economy in the peasant's household, compared with the firewood bundles which must be bought in towns. In the cottage there is always a spacious pantry, on the shelves of which the new-baked loaves are temptingly displayed, with such other eatables as may be going. There, also, the beer-barrel, when on tap, is kept. The "back'us," kitchen, or scullery contains a grate and small oven for ordinary cooking, with conveniences for washing. A pig-sty is not often absent, in which the villager's useful companion may enjoy himself in comfort till the time comes when he must contribute to the comfort of others. The garden is green with abundant crops of vegetables, among which you will be sure to find a good store of onions. A few fruit-trees will not be wanting, with gooseberry and currant bushes; and, not to sacrifice every inch of ground to hard utility, the cottage front will certainly be brightened by flowers.

This is no overdrawn picture of scores of Suffolk cottages I have seen. Of course there is a reverse side, which has not been neglected in its turn. Make close inquiry into the dwellings of the poor in any large town, and there would be plenty to match the worst aspects of village life. But I am now comparing like with like—good country with good town dwellings—as far as it is possible to do so. I have said that 2s. weekly would be thought a high rent for cottages which may be favourably compared

with the Lavender Hill houses for internal accommodation, and which far surpass them in gardens, command of pure air, and other surroundings. It follows that in actual rental alone there is a difference of 3s. 9d. a-week against the town dweller and in favour of the peasant, while the produce of the garden and the profit of pig-keeping go to increase the relative advantages of the latter. I have elsewhere said that 2s. weekly is a fair average to place to the peasant's credit on account of under-rental in any comparison of town with country earnings. My readers will now be able to judge whether this statement is exaggerated, bearing in mind that the Shaftesbury Park estate contains what is called "the workmen's city," and that some at least of the cheapest-rented houses I have taken for the purposes of this comparison are occupied by labouring men of a lower grade than artisans, and earning much lower wages. So much for rental. Now as to cost. If a man wishes to buy a five-roomed house at Lavender Hill, the price is £170, exclusive of the law charges. For this sum, however, he does not secure the freehold; he holds the house on a ninety-nine years' lease, and must pay an annual ground-rent of £2, 12s. If the ground-rent be capitalised, an addition of, say £50, must be made to the purchase-money, which will then come to £220. These houses are built under conditions favourable to economy; the quantities of materials and fittings of all kinds which are required must make them considerably cheaper than they could be bought by ordinary builders. On the other hand, upon most large estates there are workshops and brickworks, so that the materials for the carcass of the cottage are supplied at first cost, and the estate carpenter or the village tradespeople supply

cheap labour. With all these advantages, the cost of a pair of cottages often mounts up to £300, or even £350, though there are cases in which they have been built for £240, or less.* Averaging the cost of each cottage at £150, and the rental at 1s. 9d. a-week, we have a yearly return of £4, 11s. for this investment, or about 3 per cent. But from this return must be deducted rates and taxes, insurance, and repairs. There is no deduction for occasional loss of rent through bad or unfortunate tenants, nor is any account taken of the land for cottage and garden. When a moderate allowance has been made under each of these heads, what remains for the landlord? Barely $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, and as soon as a cottage has seen its best days, a good deal less. This is a landowner's encouragement to invest more money in cottage building under the present system. But the lowest dividend made by the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Company at Lavender Hill has been 6 per cent, and Lord Shaftesbury has stated that they might have divided 10 per cent.

Of course there is a point of view from which landowners perform no more than a simple act of duty in building on their estates good cottages and a sufficient number of them, irrespective of any direct return. Such cottages are as necessary, it is said, to the proper cultivation of the soil, as the

* Four cottages for labourers (two double cottages) were built by the Duke of Rutland two years ago at Cheveley at a cost of £600, or £150 apiece. Two of these cottages are occupied, rent free, by horse-keepers, with 14s. wages. Two others were occupied by common labourers. An outlay of £600 would represent £7, 10s. per annum on each of the four cottages. The Duke of Rutland, however, lets them, with the farm, at £6 a-year, and his tenant sublets them to the men at £4, 10s.

farm-buildings, the stables, or the farmhouse. A landowner must look, not to the rent he derives from each separate structure on each farm, whether for the accommodation of farmer, men, stock, produce, or implements, but to the general requirements of the tenant, and to the rent paid as a whole. This must, in fact, be the view now taken by landlords; and a more general recognition of the duty of giving to the human beings employed upon the land decent and comfortable homes has led to a great change for the better in the dwellings of the labourers. But I cannot help thinking that still greater progress would have been made in this direction, and that less would remain to be done in cottage building and cottage improvement, if the change had been brought about by the natural operation of economic laws, rather than by the gradual recognition of a social and moral obligation. It is clear that the labourer now pays for his cottage less than it costs and less than it is worth. He is therefore paid to this extent, whatever it may be, not in money, but in kind. It is an addition to his weekly wage, though not directly represented in coin; and one material objection to the form of this supplement to wages is, that he himself is hardly ever conscious of it. In one instance the fact was brought to his knowledge very forcibly indeed. The story was told by an East Anglian rector in a country parish, who said to his gardener, at an early stage of the lock-out, "John, what wages are you getting?" "Eighteen shillings a-week, sir." "Are you satisfied with your wages?" "Yes, sir, quite satisfied." "Very well, John; then I shall raise them 3s. a-week and give you a guinea." John was overcome with gratitude. "Oh! thank you very much indeed, sir! Thank you!" "Yes, but John, I shall raise your rent 3s. a-week too." I

suppose John did not feel constrained to say "Thank you" this time ; but if the cottage was worth 3s. a-week more rent than John was paying for it, it is not clear that he could have urged any valid objection. To give with one hand and take away with another leaves the wage-fund where it stood before ; but this readjustment of rental and earnings puts the relations between employers and employed on a much sounder footing, for wages then really mean wages, and rent means rent.

At present both are arbitrary, nominal terms, which do not indicate what they really represent. The wages are not represented by 13s. or 14s. in money, but by a mixed payment in coin and kind, not easily estimated, varying as rents, cottage accommodation, and size of garden do vary even in the same parish and upon the same occupation, and misleading not only outside critics, but the very parties to the contract, who only see dimly where they stand. Again, why should not cottage rents be really a test of value? Why should £300 invested in dwellings for the working classes in towns produce 5 or 6 per cent, and the same sum expended on cottages in the country yield—directly at least—nearer 2 than 3 per cent? Another question suggests itself. Who bears the loss which arises through the under-rental of cottage property—the farmer or the landlord? Upon many estates the farmer who requires additional cottage accommodation for his labourers guarantees 5 per cent upon the expenditure, which becomes an addition to his rental. But there comes a time in the life of a cottage when 5 per cent upon the original expenditure is largely eaten into by repairs, and in any case the land upon which the cottage stands, with its garden-plot, returns no interest. The landlord, of course, has it in his

power to make the farmer pay ; but it is doubtful whether in practice the farmer does really pay the full interest which cottage property ought fairly to yield. If I am right in this conjecture, the difference between the fair value and actual rental of a cottage and garden is substantially a joint contribution in kind by landlord and farmer to supplement the money wages given by the latter. In some cases, as I have said, the landlord no doubt protects himself, and leaves the employer to bear the whole wage-burden. It may be argued, too, that the farmer pays for the cottages indirectly if not directly. I will not follow this inquiry further. It is sufficient to note here that the peasants' wages are supplemented in the way here described from one source or the other.

In a secluded parish six or seven miles from Ipswich, I saw three cottages with a single bedroom apiece. In one of these cottages lived an old man alone ; in a second, a woman with four children, the eldest 13 years old ; in the third there was a widow with a grown-up son. The widow's cottage was shored up to keep it erect, and the precaution was not unnecessary, for there had already been a heavy fall of brickwork at one extremity. A few hurdles, with furze-bushes, and a plaster of clay, had been made use of to replace the fallen wall. At other places sacking was hung or nailed to keep out the wind. In wet weather the rain came streaming into the bedroom, and a pail was kept near one of the two beds to catch it. A heavy stack of chimneys looked as though it would fall with the first gale, and the whole tenement was so dilapidated and crazy that it would be pretty sure to go too. In this cottage the widow had lived four-and-forty years, and had brought up six children. Her husband had been dead twenty-one years,

and all her children were married, excepting the son who lived with her. For him, with a neighbour's help, she was brewing his harvest beer, his harvest money being £8, with three bushels of malt and three pounds of hops. Considering the difficulty of neatness and cleanliness in such a dwelling, the poor woman had done wonders with her cottage. Paper was pasted over the holes and crannies, and it was not till you went outside that you saw what time had done to this wretched hovel. The farmer under whom the cottages were held said they were not worth repair, and that the next thing to be done was to pull them down. He is no doubt right, and if they are let alone much longer they will save anybody the trouble of pulling them down. Meanwhile they house some of our English peasantry, and they stand—at present—on the estate of the largest landowner in Suffolk. In the next parish, on the same estate, are four cottages with but one bedroom each ; fortunately, the children are young. The rain comes through the roof into the pantry of most of the houses. The well is dry. Fortunately, water may be had from a running stream at no great distance. The dryness of the well is of small importance compared with its ruinous condition, for the sides are tumbling in, the rotten lid no longer covers the mouth, and that no small child has yet fallen in is almost a miracle. The weekly rent for these cottages and the garden patch which goes with each is 1s., paid direct to the landlord's agent.

These cases are mentioned here only to show the working of the system of under-renting. If, instead of receiving merely a nominal rent, the landowner in this and other instances were sure of receiving a fair interest upon outlay, the substitution of new and roomy cottages for old ones of

this bad type would be much more rapid. No doubt I am here taking low ground, and it is certain that the change in the law of settlement and a feeling of the moral obligation incumbent upon landowners have done much during the last ten or fifteen years in providing better dwellings for farm-labourers and their families. But the operation of the economic law is safer, surer, and juster, and therefore one would be glad to find a change made in a system which gives the labourer a house and garden in part payment for his labour, but thereby deprives him of the power of paying a fair rent, and of securing decent accommodation for his family, except as an act of grace. On Lord Leicester's estate in Norfolk, the cottages are let direct to the labourers, on the nomination of the farmers who employ them. A similar system prevails on some estates in Suffolk. I have already described the system on Sir Edward Kerrison's estate, where the cottages are also let directly to the labourers, and a register of their families enables the agent to check overcrowding, and adapt the family to the house, or the house to the family. This absence of any intermediate tenancy rightly throws upon the actual landlord the responsibility of seeing that his cottages are in habitable condition, and do not become, through want of proper bedroom accommodation, the means of lowering the self-respect and corrupting the morals of their inmates. But why should A, who is employed by C, have to rely upon B for what is really a portion of his wages? That is what happens when estate-cottages are under-rented, as is invariably the case. The answer may be that, though there exists no privity, as lawyers would say, between B and A in the character of master and servant, B, the landowner, recoups himself for the loss upon A's cottage out of

the rent which C, the farmer, pays him, not for A's cottage, but for something else. If this be, indeed, the true answer, and if landowners are satisfied that they do in fact and to the full extent regain from the farmer what they lose in dealing with the labourer, all one can say is that it seems a very round-about, muddling arrangement. I have heard of complaints by landowners, that after spending large sums in building good cottages for the labourers, the farmers use these cottages as a means of keeping wages low. Such complaints, if well founded, throw a good deal of light upon the question, and show not only that the cottage is one element in fixing wages, but that landowners do indirectly contribute in this way towards the wage-fund. However this may be, the labourer in the country, like the worker in towns, ought to pay such a rent as would entitle him to a decent cottage as a right, and not as an act of grace. He should, in short, have money's worth in return for money.

Under the present system of supplemented wages, the farm-labourer does not know what he receives, or what he is entitled to receive. The possession of a good cottage is often a matter of accident; and then the lucky labourer to whom it is allotted has a substantial addition to his wages, though, perhaps, he works no harder or better than his fellows. Through accident, again, the cottages upon one estate will, perhaps, be far better than those in an adjoining parish. Though the labourers are no better, they are at once placed in a better position than their neighbours. These inequalities are theoretically indefensible, and involve an injustice which would disappear if you could settle what average sum the labourer now receives indirectly in the shape of under-rent, and if you paid

him this money, leaving him to make his own terms for a suitable dwelling, and to give such rent as it was really worth. We must remember, however, that the change here spoken of would cut two ways. If the labourer living in a good cottage provided by the farmer or landowner receives an addition to his weekly wages in the shape of under-rent, it must be because he is worth this additional 2s., or whatever the sum may be. But then many labourers who live in the village, in houses not rented from their employers, must be worth the same wages; and as they do not receive the 2s. in kind, they are entitled to receive it in money. To his labourers who live in under-rented cottages upon the farm, the farmer may say with much force, "You are really receiving 2s. a-week in the shape of cheap cottage accommodation." On the other hand, unless he can distinguish and say they are much better men than those of his labourers who live in the village, how can he justly ignore the claims of the latter to the same rate of pay? I see no logical escape from this conclusion, nor is one to be desired; for if you go into the village you find the standard of cottage rents there largely ruled by the artificial standard existing upon the great estates, the result being indifferent cottages, or very bad ones, without the stimulus to improve them or build better ones which a sense of duty imposes upon landowners. In the village, therefore, the motive of self-interest is imperative; and it is the sole motive to which we can appeal. We shall never have good cottages in "open" villages until the labourer can make it worth the while of private speculators to build such cottages by coming with money in his hand and offering an adequate rental. Thus we must look outside the farm and estate for the full effect of the present cottage system there; and

the mischief which directly or indirectly flows from it is indeed seen most clearly in the village.

Some years ago one heard a good deal about new materials, the use of which would largely diminish the cost of cottages and help to solve the problem of providing good homes for farm-labourers. Slabs of concrete, strengthened by angle-iron, and with a base of straw, were used by one inventor, Mr Nicoll, who undertook to build a cottage, with three bedrooms, living-room, scullery, pantry, &c., at a cost of from £85 to £105; or a double cottage, with a single bedroom apiece, for £100 the pair. Paper slabs or boards were another promising invention. The new cottages throughout Suffolk, however, are built of the old materials—generally brick, but occasionally flint or stone. Sometimes the estate supplies these materials; but when they must be bought, they now cost much more than they did a dozen years ago: so that cottage-building is even a more hopeless investment than it used to be. It is remarkable that no plan for erecting cheaper cottages seems as yet to have borne the test of experience. At all events, none has been generally adopted; and here the landowners stand upon the old ways. About ten years ago the cost of the cottages built under the sanction of the Enclosure Commissioners averaged £143 apiece. I have seen cottages recently erected which are said to have cost less; but if you inquire into the facts, setting down a fair allowance for haulage and labour where estate workmen have been employed, it is doubtful whether a three-bedroomed cottage, with living-room, scullery, pantry, and the usual out-buildings, can be built in a workmanlike manner for less than £150; and if there be any attempt at external ornament, the cost will be greater. Any inventor who hits upon

the right method or material for cheapening labourers' dwellings will render a most valuable service to rural society. But, whatever the plan or the material, simplicity is indispensable. From chimney to foundation there must be nothing which the village mason or carpenter cannot easily repair or replace. The size of a cottage raises a question of some difficulty. Upon Crown lands no cottages are built without three bedrooms, upon the principle that if these are not wanted at first, they may be by-and-by, and one day will be. Now, it is no kindness to any man, whether of the labouring class or of any other class, to give him a larger house than he wants. Such a house costs more to furnish it than the man can afford, and is not so easily kept in order as a smaller dwelling. What the farm-labourer often does under these circumstances is, if possible, to take a lodger; and I have seen cases in which lodgers have been taken, notwithstanding stringent prohibitions in the terms of letting. The difficulty is, that if you plant a newly-married couple in a house which at the time suits them perfectly, three or four years may make it unsuitable, and a few years more may render it demoralising; and, meanwhile, if they have the wish to remove, they have not always the opportunity. But in or close by a village it would be waste of money if every dwelling were of the same type; and smaller cottages may properly be built there for the accommodation of old people, small families, or married persons without children.

The apportionment of suitable houses to families is not the only difficulty when cottages are isolated. Indeed it is questionable whether the advantage of being near a man's work is not more than counterbalanced by the dis-

advantage of distance from the church, the school, the shops, and the little society of the village. The church usually requires a walk only once a-week; and this, perhaps, is no great hardship. But where there are children, distance from the school is a serious matter, and means wear of boots and shoes, wet clothes, much discomfort in trudging through miry roads in bad weather, positive injury to the health of delicate children, and irregular attendance in all cases. It is perhaps no loss, but rather a gain, to some men to live not too near the ale-house. But the inconvenience of living remote from shops is one which will come home to most housewives, particularly to those who have no servant, and perhaps a houseful of children to look after. Then a little gossip for the wife, and change of society for the husband when work is over, are harmless indulgences, and tend to brighten and sharpen both man and wife. It is natural there should be a craving after society; and I find that farm-labourers and their wives will sometimes prefer an indifferent home in the village to a much better one far away. The farmer has his own society, and a horse to take him to the market-town or his neighbour's house when he wishes to go there. But opportunities of social intercourse are rare with the farm-labourer who lives apart from his fellows. If cottages were brought together, instead of being scattered up and down the parish, the task of the minister and the schoolmaster would be much easier. Sanitary supervision would also be more effectual. A village club-room, village lectures, village concerts, an evening school for adults, and a co-operative store, might then be more usual than they are; rural amusements of a good class might brighten some of the

long evenings, and refining influences would exert greater power. The farm-labourer is more tractable than the town-worker; but the difficulty is to get at him. Then the young men are now sometimes in straits for lodgings, and are perhaps often driven into early and improvident marriages through the discomfort in which they live.

CHAPTER X.

FARM - LABOURERS' PERQUISITES—BEER—ITS TEMPTATIONS—IRISH ABSTEMIOUSNESS—A HARVEST "FROLIC"—HARVEST HOURS AND LABOUR—GLEANING—RABBITS CAUGHT IN CORN—SUMMER AND WINTER—UNEQUAL WORK RENDERED IN—WAGES OF OLD MEN—OFTEN NOT EARNED—EQUIVALENT TO PENSIONS—PROVISION FOR OLD AGE—CONDITIONS OF RURAL SOCIETY—LABOURER'S "INDEPENDENCE" NECESSARILY A QUALIFIED ONE—NEIGHBOURLY HELP IN TROUBLE—WINE AND MEDICAL COMFORTS—TAKEN AS OF COURSE—LABOURERS' MEDICAL CLUBS—TRIED IN GRANTHAM UNION—SUGGESTED BY SIR E. KERRISON IN EAST ANGLIA—THEIR EFFECT UPON POOR'S - RATE—RATE-SUPPORTED DISPENSARIES IN IRELAND—SELF-HELP BETTER—FAMILY EARNINGS—ACTUAL WAGES OF FARM-LABOURERS IN MONEY AND KIND—ATTEMPT TO ESTIMATE—SYSTEM OF PAYMENT IN EASTERN COUNTIES—HARVEST-WAGES—FIXED REGULAR WAGES PREFERABLE—WITH LONG HIRINGS—BRIGHT SIDE OF PEASANT LIFE—"PILGRIMAGE" SUGGESTED, BY TOWN LABOURERS TO COUNTRY.

So much has been said about the perquisites enjoyed by farm-labourers in the Eastern Counties, that a chapter specially devoted to this subject may not be without value. Extra earnings from piece-work do not, of course, come under this head. I refer to grants or privileges which may be fairly reckoned as money's worth and added to the nominal weekly wages. Under-rented cottages are a branch of the perquisite question already treated. Next may come the beer—a perquisite of doubtful advantage,

though I am bound to say it is one generally popular among the men who receive it. A farmer will often get more work done by the prospect of a pint or two of beer than he will by twice its equivalent in money. When an employer has the reputation of keeping "a wonderful good tap," he has always at hand a ready means of stimulating his men to extra exertion or of paying them for overtime. But however popular this system may be with the men, it is a vicious system. It teaches the young lads to drink, if they need any such teaching. As to the men, they would be better in health and in pocket if they had money instead of liquor ; and, indeed, much of this habitual beer-drinking is a selfish indulgence which intercepts so much money from wives and families. The value of the drink thus given must be from sixpence to ninepence a-week per man, and sixpence would certainly be thought by most farmers a low average. Some farmers in 1874 discontinued the gifts of harvest-beer, or of malt and hops for home brewing, and paid wholly in cash, instead of partly in cash and partly in kind. I am assured that two gallons of beer a-day represent by no means an unusual consumption in the harvest-field, and that three gallons have sometimes been drunk by one thirsty soul. But the tradition that men cannot do hard work at harvest-time without all this soaking is a bad and a false one. When Irish labourers gathered in great part of the harvest, as they formerly did in many districts in Suffolk, they lived chiefly on meal and milk, of which they consumed large quantities, eating but little meat and drinking but little beer. Yet no men could work harder. At times, no doubt, some of them would "break out ;" but the result of their abstemiousness was, that they took back with them considerable sums to

their own country, whereas the Suffolk men muddle away in drink a large portion of their extra earnings at this season.

At the beginning of harvest, one man, a first-rate labourer, ordered in a nine-gallon cask of beer from a brewer's. This cask was to last him a fortnight, but he drank it out in three days. The result was, that he did no harvesting till all the liquor was gone, and then had to work for the remainder of the fortnight—a thirsty but a sober man—without any beer. This, too, was the smallest part of the penalty he paid; he had agreed to forfeit 10s. a-day for any loss of time caused by drink, so he did not make a good harvest. A farmer assures me that the practice of giving beer is dying out, though my experience certainly is that it is dying hard. "It is the men, not the farmers," says my informant, "who want the beer system retained. For example, my men begged for beer this harvest"—that is, no doubt, they wished part of the harvest-money to be replaced by liquor. "They said I could brew cheaper than they could, that I had better cellars for keeping beer than they had, and so on. This is quite true, but I would not give way. I do not think they drank much, and what they did take was of very light and wholesome quality. During the whole of harvest not one man was absent through drink, nor did I hear of one man being the worse for drink. My men wished for a 'frolic' this year. It was entirely managed by the men themselves. I gave them a sheep on condition that if one man got drunk, or if there was one case of quarrelling, they were to pay for the sheep. The supper passed off without an unpleasant word, and the whole party left sober and happy. I am very glad I have not to receive payment for the sheep; it

is something to their credit when 20 or more agricultural labourers with their families can manage a harvest-supper in their own way without a single case of excess."

It is often said that if the men earn high wages at harvest, they have to work like horses. I have tried, therefore, to ascertain how long the men do work at harvest-time. The hours seem to vary in different parts of Suffolk, even under the same system of remuneration. If the men contract to "clear the land" for a given sum, it is manifestly their interest to finish the work as quickly as possible, for the sooner it is ended the sooner they will be put again upon regular wages. Accordingly, I heard in some cases of their working under the harvest-moon till 9 or even 10 at night. But these cases are rare; and from different districts of the county the same statements were made to me,—that though the men are nominally in the harvest-field for 14 hours—from 5 A.M. to 7 P.M.—their actual time of work in a harvest-day is not more than between ten hours and a half and eleven hours. They are supposed to start at 5 A.M., but seldom do so before half-past five, and before leaving home usually provide themselves with a harvest-cake and a pint of beer. Breakfast at 8 occupies half or three-quarters of an hour. Between 10 and 11 A.M. there is a break of a quarter of an hour or 20 minutes for beer; and I fear the barrel or stone-bottle is responsible for other intervals. At mid-day an hour or an hour and a quarter is taken for dinner. At 4 P.M. there is half an hour's rest and refreshment, locally known as "beever," and at 7 o'clock work generally ceases. One employer says: "My men worked from 5 A.M. till 7 P.M. regularly. They may have exceeded their time on one or two occasions by

half an hour to finish carting a field at night ; but neither I nor any of my brother farmers about me approve of extra long hours. It is the worst possible policy to overwork your men. The best farmers always like their men to come to work fresh and well-rested in the morning. My men worked steadily and easily at a uniform pace. There was no 'tearing and rampaging ;' and at night they did not seem over-tired, but were quite fresh and chirpy. I have seen a good deal of the work in the factories, and I say without hesitation that harvest-work is not so exhausting as everyday labour in our ironworks or on builders' contracts." When it is remembered that machines now do the heavy work of cutting the corn, while at the stack the elevator relieves the men of the still harder work of pitching, this statement—made by a gentleman of great industrial experience—will not appear exaggerated.

I may mention here another harvest privilege—gleaning. I have asked on all hands for information as to its value, and find it set down at from 15s. to 30s. per family. In some parts of England there is a custom adopted in order to give all the gleaners a fair start. The church bell rings at 7 A.M., before which hour no gleaning is allowed ; and it rings again at 7 P.M., as a signal to the gleaners to leave the fields. At the end of the gleaning each family contributes a penny to the bellringer. In the Eastern Counties I do not hear of any such custom. As a rule, gleaners are not expected to go outside their own parish ; and in some places the farmer restricts the gleaning to the families of his own labourers and the widows of the parish. A not very recent estimate of the produce of gleaning gives the value of the total gleanings of 388 families at £423,

12s., or an average of rather less than 22s. per family, which does not differ materially from the estimate furnished to me. Of course the larger the family the greater the value of the corn gathered from the harvest-fields.

In harvest the reapers are allowed all the rabbits they can catch in the corn. As the reaping-machine narrows the rows of standing corn, and thus diminishes the cover, the rabbits try to make their escape; whereupon every man and boy gives tongue, and the startled creatures are so confused that they are easily shot or run down. I saw above 50 killed in a small field of beans. One farmer tells me his men caught 16 or 18 rabbits a-day towards the end of the harvest, and the reapers on a neighbouring farm caught 60 in one day. Employers, however, complain that the men are taken off their work by the frequent chevyng and capturing of rabbits, and injure the standing corn by running into it in pursuit. Sometimes the men divide the spoil; sometimes the rabbits are put up to auction among the men, who often give more for them than the creatures are worth. The proceeds are added to the "largess" fund, and go towards providing the harvest-supper. "Largess" is an ancient custom, peculiar, I believe, to the Eastern Counties, and not yet gone out of use. The harvest-people solicit contributions under this name, and have a "frolic" at the village inn. These frolics still give rise to a good deal of drunkenness, but there is far less excess than there used to be. Occasionally the farmer provides a harvest-supper at his own expense.

Farmers contend that when they pay the same in winter as in summer, getting three or four hours' less work done in winter than in summer, this unequal return for equal

wages must be taken into account and set down to the labourers' credit.* Again, men are generally paid "wet or dry"—when farm-work is practicable and when it is out of the question. Here the farmer receives no return for the wages paid. It is not the labourer's fault that he renders no service, but it is the farmer and not the labourer who suffers. I have before expressed an opinion that the labourer ought not to suffer, and that farmers would do well to hire their labourers for a term. If this term were even for a month, employers would be protected against a sudden strike, while the men would be sure of regular work and pay not contingent upon good weather. Still, the farmer is entitled to show how these conditions, which generally regulate engagements at present, make against him, and

* Here is an entry from a farmer's diary: "*Dec. 22, 1874.*—A fine bright winter's day. My men are manure-carting, emptying yards and placing the manure in a large heap, locally called a *muck'up* (muck-heap). They began work at 7 A.M., worked till eleven, when they stopped for 20 minutes for refreshment. Then they worked again till half-past one, by which time they had finished their 'stent' or 'stint' (the quantity which is held to make a day's work), and went home. Day's work, 6 hours (6 hours and 10 minutes). This happens day after day. The moral of which is, to me, clear—viz., that a very small amount of labour has come to be considered a fair day's work in East Anglia. There is some difference between this and a 'day's work' in an ironwork. Now, note an objection to piece-work: 20 carts filled per man is called a day's work; but unless constantly overlooked, they will throw in the manure lightly, and make the smallest loads possible. In a word, their work is not conscientious. And on a farm with two men here, three half a mile further on, one in next field, one in another, and so forth, how is it possible to exercise adequate supervision? That is the difficulty in the case of piece-work.

"*Dec. 26.*—We are all frozen out here. Instead of all work and no pay, it is all pay and no work. However, we are miserly, hard-fisted farmers, I suppose, and according to some people, shall remain so to the end of the chapter."

must be considered in estimating the rate of farm wages. Once more, when the old men are employed upon a farm at rates of pay which they seldom or never earn, such employment is, in fact, equivalent to a retiring allowance given to worn-out servants.* But this provision for the old, though very often made, as I have seen in numerous instances, depends not only upon the kindly feeling of employers, but upon their power to continue the annuity. It is a pleasant evidence of paternal relations surviving in our villages ; but a more wholesome system would be one under which the labourers during their prime earned the full wages they were worth, and were thus able, with a little help, to make some provision of their own for old age. This, I think, should be the chief aim of all benefit societies ; for there can be no more steadying influence, or one more calculated to promote self-denial and self-respect, than the feeling that a man is gradually laying by a sum which will make him independent of the parish, and independent also of the work which is given out of charity and may at any moment be withheld.

A little experience of the country soon teaches you how idle it is to theorise upon the conditions of rural labour and rural society. Farm-labourers cannot be independent of their masters, as workmen in towns are of theirs. The

* "To show," says a farmer, "how the old men 'hang on' and the young ones go away, take my farm. I have 20 men, 13 of whom are above 50 and under 75, the majority ranging from 60 to 65, while only 7 men of the whole 20 are under 50. Yet all these men are on full pay, although they are certainly not worth it. Several have worked on the farm 30 or 40 years. I maintain that I pay 30 per cent more in wage than the work is marketably worth ; but neither I nor any other decent farmer would turn a man off simply because he was old. It has hitherto been the custom to 'find a corner somewhere' for the men who have grown old on a place."

farm-labourer is generally the tenant of his employer, under whose eye he lives and dies. His family, and his and their doings, are intimately known to the farmer, who is expected to sympathise with him and them, and to help them in little and great emergencies of which a town employer would be entirely ignorant. Moreover, if you wished ever so much to change some of these social conditions and make the labourer more independent, you could not do so. For instance, a man wants his wood or coal carted. The farmer lends his horses and waggons, never thinking of making any charge for them. The labourer, or one of his family, is taken suddenly ill, and the doctor lives miles away. The farmer sends for him. People want to visit relatives at a distance. The farmer lends a horse and cart. Or it is, "Please, sir, my wife (or husband, or child) is took dreadful bad. Could you let us have a little brandy, sir?" Or the surgeon looks in at the farmhouse in passing and says, "By the way, that woman (or child) down there wants a bottle of really good port wine, and can't buy it. Do you mind sending her a bottle?" And away goes a bottle or two of the farmer's '47 port, if he has any. Or, again, "The doctor has ordered some nice beef-tea, or broth, for my husband. I'm so 'stowed up' with the children that I thought perhaps the missus would let her cook make us a little. She ha' got all the proper things, and it will be ten times as good as I could make." Or the wife calls and asks for the farmer's wife—"If you please, I want your advice what to do, ma'am. My boy is took dreadful—I can't make it out, ma'am." The symptoms are described, and a consultation follows: "Got any mustard at home?" "A little, ma'am." "Any linseed?" "No." "Any flannel?"

"Only my petticoat, ma'am—no odd pieces." In the result the woman gets flannel, linseed, perhaps a little alterative medicine, and, what is of greater value, reassuring advice and direction.* Unfortunately, peasant women, who ought to be more helpful in sickness than women of their own class in towns, are often like children in such emergencies. It is common to hear of a clergyman's or a farmer's wife—"She's a real mother to the folks about here!"—that is, not only her husband's purse, but her training and experience, are always ready for the benefit of her poorer and more ignorant neighbours when they are in trouble.

Such services can be estimated by no money value. They are invaluable; and, in the present conditions of rural life, they are often indispensable. Both gifts and advice, however, are taken very much as a matter of course.

* Here are two other examples: "For several weeks," writes a farmer, "a poor old man who has worked for me has been very ill with chronic bronchitis. His wife (both are 75 years old) is also very ill. He has 8s. a-week from his club for six months (then he will have, if he live, 4s.) He has 1 stone flour, say 1s. 6d. or 2s., from the parish. I allow him 3s. a-week, making up his wage to the nominal 13s. So far all is pretty easy. But the doctor comes to me and says, 'Nothing will save that old man but brandy, and it must be fine old brandy—a dessert-spoonful every two hours. The old woman wants it also. And he has no teeth. He must have beef-tea and braised beef, and sago-puddings with eggs in them, and fresh eggs'—at midwinter when eggs are 2d. apiece. So for the past eight weeks we have been keeping these poor old birds on this very expensive diet. We don't grudge it; but when 'paternal relations' cease, who is to take our place? The Union? How? Years hence, when the labourer is educated up to quite a different point from that at which he stands at present, his status may be so much improved that upon *himself* will fall the burden of keeping his sick and aged relatives. At present he abuses *us* for doing it, which is inconsistent. I have three patients of that sort on my hands at the present time."

"Thank you kindly" is about all that is given or looked for on either side. A farmer would be thought ill of who did not oblige his people by lending a cart or waggon and horses, or by giving wine and other delicacies in illness. "We should be cried down through the whole parish as hard-fisted and hard-hearted if we refused our help in such cases," said one farmer. "I had three or four waggons going all last week, fetching wood home for my men, seven miles out and seven miles home," said another in another part of the county. A third mentioned a case in which one of his labourers worked for himself a day on his allotment, then worked for the farmer a bare day, and was invalided all the rest of the week. He did not go on his sick-club allowance, because every day he expected to be able to work, and, not being a pauper, he would get no medical aid from the parish. So the account between himself and his master at the end of the week stood thus: Brandy and arrowroot supplied by the farmer, 2s.; beef for beef-tea, 2s. 6d.; excess of wages paid over actual earnings, 12s.; loan of waggon and horses (estimated value), 10s.; total, £1, 6s. 6d. There were cases in which, when Unionist workmen fell ill while locked out, they received the kindest attention from their late employers, who made themselves answerable for the surgeon's bill, and supplied little delicacies from their own table. In one such case I was told the cost to the farmer would be £2 or £3, but he gained no credit for his benevolence. "He wouldn't have done all that," said the wife, "if he hadn't ha' wanted my husband to give up his Union ticket and come back into his fields." The employer who had shown this kindness, and told me of this ungracious speech in return, added bitterly—"I dare-

say you have heard farmers complain of ingratitude. I don't, because I never expect gratitude."

To the upper classes, at least, one of the great charms of country life is the "good feeling" which has been so much sneered at by the Union leaders. One class, it is said, gives, and the other receives, neighbourly attentions, without any sense of patronage on the one side or of "servile dependence" on the other. It is undeniably true that a country parish in Suffolk has not, like White-chapel, surgeons at call, a Union workhouse handy, and the doors of the London Hospital always open. There will therefore always be room for counsel and kindness among people who are as isolated as country folk are ; but it is a sound rule that, whether in towns or villages, people should be taught to do as much as possible for themselves, and to depend as little as possible upon the bounty of others. Unnecessary dependence demoralises the recipients of any bounty, and cannot but impair their self-respect. Very early, therefore, in my wanderings through Suffolk, after hearing the stories of frequent resort to the farmhouse, or, still worse, to the Union, for medical relief, I find in my note-book a query whether among farm-labourers, as among other classes of workpeople, medical advice and medicine might not be obtained upon co-operative principles. Sir Edward Kerrison publicly called attention to the same subject in a valuable letter, in which he described a labourers' medical club now successfully worked in the parishes constituting the Grantham Union, and having no fewer than 4577 subscribing members. The annual rate of payment by subscribing members is : For each person above 16 years of age, 2s. 6d. ; under 16, 1s. 6d. ; under 13, 1s. There is no extra payment for

families exceeding five in number, and each midwifery case is charged 6s. The medical men receive increased payments upon these rates from the subscriptions of honorary members. Subscribing members may choose any of the doctors who belong to the club, but must consult the same one for a year. If a member is unable to attend at the surgery, he is visited at his own house; and the last published report shows that the nine medical men retained by the club together received in the year from this source £689. Such are the particulars of this medical club furnished by Sir Edward Kerrison. That it must have some effect in diminishing the rates is certain, and statistics show that in the Grantham Union the average cost of poor relief per head of the population in the year ending Lady-day 1872, was as low as 7s. 9d.; while in two other Lincolnshire Unions—Spilsby and Bourn—it was respectively 10s. and 9s. 2d.; and in two Suffolk Unions—Sudbury and Hoxne—it was 10s. 10d. and 11s.

Probably the lower rates in the more northern county are largely due to higher wages. The more scattered population of Suffolk may also increase the difficulty of establishing medical clubs; but it must be possible to do something towards starting such clubs here, and, apart from their effect in reducing poor-rates, they would do still more to make the labouring population self-reliant. Medical relief must be distinguished from medical comforts, for which, in time of need, the families of labourers would still, no doubt, be largely indebted to farmers, squires, and clergy. But there is no reason why farm-labourers should be beholden to the parish for medical aid. "Early and improvident marriages in agricultural districts," says Sir Edward Kerrison, "make doctors' bills soon

appear a serious item in the expenditure of a poor man's family, and therefore the temptation is great to sacrifice independence by obtaining a medical order. In districts where dispensaries are established, the poor can and do avail themselves of the assistance these afford ; but there are few such institutions in Suffolk. In Ireland they are supported out of the rates, the landlord paying such rates as are assessed upon tenants not exceeding £4 in annual value, and one-half on those exceeding that amount." But rate-supported dispensaries are not easily to be distinguished from the parish-doctor form of medical relief, and self-help is in every way more desirable. The charges for a surgeon's visit in a case of continued sickness are a heavy drain upon a labourer's resources—more, in fact, than he can bear. On the other hand, it is from every point of view important to discourage the beginning of pauperism, which I fancy very often does begin with the application for medical relief. Once begun, the downward process is easy ; and when families are once pauperised, though but partially, the taint becomes hereditary, is often passed on from generation to generation, and is most difficult to extirpate. It would be of signal public advantage to give the labourer the means of obtaining cheap medical advice mainly by his own contributions and through the power of numbers ; and one advantage of Trade-Unionism is, that it paves the way for such co-operation by showing these men what association will do for them.

Taking the newest and therefore the best and highest-rented cottages, and comparing rents with labourers' or artisans' dwellings in towns, it would be by no means an exaggeration to reckon the saving of rent as equivalent, on an average, to 2s. a-week, which goes from the employers'

into the labourers' pocket, and may be fairly added to wages. Then there is the garden patch or allotment—frequently both. What would the artisan give for this bit of land? From it the farm-labourer—by extra exertion, no doubt—obtains produce worth from 1s. to 1s. 6d. a-week for the support of himself and his family. Sometimes the farmer ploughs the allotment. The pig or pigs cost something to keep and to fatten, but help to pay the rent, and also manure the garden. Where the farmer objects to pig-keeping, he often gives manure. Sometimes corn is sold for the pig at market-rates; straw is given for the same purpose; milk is given or sold at a nominal price, but not always valued as it should be—perhaps because it has to be fetched; fagot-wood is given or sold on favourable terms, and other little privileges are enjoyed, not forgetting a money present or a joint of beef at Christmas. "I called on two of my cottagers last night," says a farmer. "One had three, and the other two fat hogs, worth £2 each, in their respective sties. Each man has a good garden, and thirty rods of allotment besides. The income of the two households may be put thus: Man and five children; he earns the year round 18s. weekly; his eldest son (fifteen years old), 10s.; boy of eleven, an average of 3s.; the wife, 3s.; the allotment is worth 2s. a-week. The pigs and garden may be thrown in. Total, 36s. Man with two children—the man earns 20s.; the wife 4s.; pigs, garden, and allotment are worth 3s. more,—total, 27s. I sink the privileges and perquisites. Benevolent outsiders have always said, 'How on earth do these poor creatures manage to live on 13s. a-week?' Exactly. How do they? The answer is—they don't."

The earnings here given no doubt include piece-work and

harvest-work, but nothing is allowed on account of cottage rent. Let us try, however, to work out the sum upon facts which do not lie hid in the farmer's books, but are of common knowledge. I begin with the nominal wages. Those of shepherds, horsekeepers, or stockmen, are 14s., with cottages often rent-free. But take the wages at 13s., which is the money received by the mass of ordinary Suffolk labourers. To this add £8, 10s. of harvest-money. In some districts it is more by £2; it is seldom less. At the lower sum, after deducting the ordinary wages, which of course cease during the harvest, you at once get an addition of about 2s. 6d. a-week. Next reckon the allotment as worth 1s. a-week, and the cottage and garden as underlet to the amount of 2s. You have then a total of 18s. 6d. weekly in money or money's worth, including no extra earnings at hay-time, or from piece-work throughout the year, and nothing for pigs, privileges, or perquisites. This is not, I think, an unfair calculation—in many cases it is an under-estimate of the men's income; and though it would be necessary to deduct a weekly shilling from the income of the men who have no allotments, it is hard, indeed, if the income arising from sources not here taken into account does not more than make up the difference. There is still room for improvement in the condition of the East Anglian peasantry. One would like to see the beer allowances compounded for by money payment, for excess in beer as in cider-drinking while at work generally marks a low type of labourer, and work which seems cheap, but is really dear. Contrasting the earnings of an agricultural labourer with those of artisans in towns, the difference seems still to be too great, and one would like to see his prospects more

hopeful, and his chances of rising in the world increased. I doubt also whether the system of payment in the Eastern Counties is a good one. For eleven months in the year low nominal wages are given, while in the harvest month the men earn between £2 and £3 a-week, according to the time occupied in clearing the ground—generally between three weeks and a month. Though they then earn per week more than three times the nominal wages paid during the rest of the year, they do not work twice as hard. One farmer tells me that the extra labour would be fairly represented by a fourth of extra pay. Would it not be better if, instead of paying these excessive wages in August, they were spread more equally over the year? Coming in a lump sum, they often tend to lavish, wasteful expenditure by the labourer. It is in the winter months that his wants are the greatest and his housekeeping the most expensive, yet then his income under the present system is often the lowest. The payment of these very high wages at harvest-time is, I believe, confined to the Eastern Counties. It may be difficult to break down such a system, but it does not seem a good one even for the men themselves. One farmer writes: "I should like to pay 20s. all the year round. I pay as much now, but in that case the men would get the money regularly and would not be tempted to squander it. The difficulty would be this—the men would work at the 20s. rate while the days were short and work was slack, and would leave you in the busy season." A yearly hiring, however, which might be enforced by and against both parties, would meet this difficulty. It would include haysel and harvest, giving perhaps some extra advantages at these seasons to compensate for extra exertions; and one inci-

dental advantage of such a contract would be that the labourer's position would then be clear both to himself and to outsiders.

If the agricultural labourer is denied some of the social advantages enjoyed by workmen in towns, others fall to his share which townspeople covet in vain. He seldom pays even for a good cottage at the rate of more than one-tenth of his income, and much more frequently the proportion is one-twelfth. The town labourer receiving 18s. or 21s. weekly will certainly not pay less than one-fifth of his wages in rent; the artisan receiving 30s., 35s., or £2 will pay one-sixth, or, including rates and taxes from which the farm-labourer is exempt, probably one-fifth. Piece-work, the allotment or garden, gleaning, pig-keeping, bee-keeping, poultry-keeping, are practicable and pleasant ways of adding to his earnings, and relieve the monotony of his regular work. Would they not rejoice the heart of many a jaded factory operative? Harvest-money comes in a lump sum — say, £8 or £9 for three weeks' or a month's work. Sometimes straw and wood may be had at a nominal price, with corn for the pig at the price the farmer himself receives at market. The beer perquisite a peasant is better without. But his wife can bake and brew, and saves a little money by home-made bread and home-brewed beer. Of fruit and vegetables he and his children can generally get as much as they care for. He subscribes to a sick club, so is free from anxiety on this score. He claims medical comforts from employer or parson almost as a right. A school is provided for his children in the village; and clothing-clubs and shoe-clubs, supplemented by outside benevolence, abound. Then his work is healthy and varied; it is performed in the fresh air; and he has nature with him

at all seasons. For half the year at least he can never be in danger of working late hours. The sun sides with the early-closing movement, and employers as well as workers must follow the sun. How many a true idyl has been written upon such pleasures of a pastoral life as are enjoyed even by the peasant ! It is easy to picture him going forth to his work on a fine spring morning, with the landscape fresh and green, plants springing, buds bursting, birds carolling, the air full of sweetness, and giving him as he breathes it a sense of new life. Contrast him with pale, leaden-cheeked mill-hands, living in squalid homes up dismal courts, confined all the year round in smoky, grimy towns, and working often by means of artificial light in close, ill-ventilated factories or shops, with one dull, unceasing uniformity of toil ! What a contrast, too, between the rosy, plump-faced children of the farm-labourer, playing all day on the common, or in the lanes, or by the brook-side, and the preternaturally sharp, unwholesome-looking little ones whose only notion of running water is derived from the gutter, and whose only playground is the street ! Much more might be written on this theme. Of course, when you look closely into the peasant's life, much of the sentiment and poetry disappears. An overstocked labour market, for example, has one invariable result in lowering the condition of the labourer ; and this law has long been in operation throughout East Anglia. But in some form or other a hard reality must press upon every class whose lot is toil. In the battle of life it is not peculiar to the class of manual labourers. The farmer is certainly not exempt from trials ; and one cannot help feeling that, apart altogether from sentiment, and even taking average wages into account, the farm-labourer works under more natural

and healthful conditions, and must, on the whole, have a pleasanter, more vigorous life than the average town-worker.

I am speaking of the peasantry of the Eastern Counties, and do not pretend to generalise as to the peasantry further south or in the west of England. But it is droll, and from one point of view touching, to find the pale-faced, narrow-chested workers pent up in our large towns subscribing for the support of ruddy, broad-shouldered peasants who, as a rule, are in so many ways better off than themselves. One can quite understand why only a small percentage of the agricultural "pilgrims" stayed in the land of promise to which they were conducted, while of those who did stay some afterwards returned. I wonder what would be the result of a similar pilgrimage into East Anglia by men of a corresponding class from the towns. They might see the good and the bad aspects of rural life there—cottages with one bedroom ; large families with provident or improvident housewives, idle or industrious, steady or unsteady fathers ; the conditions of work for men, the employment open to children ; and they might follow the wage question through all its phases of money and kind. They might compare the three-bedroomed cottage and 20-rod garden, let for 1s. 6d. or 1s. 9d. per week, with town dwellings of the same size, and would probably find such dwellings, if in town, not represented by a weekly rental of 6s. or 7s. A few visits, paid by intelligent working men in towns to an average country village, would do them more good than joining a mob of holiday excursionists to the sea-side, and would probably dispel some illusions about rural serfs and their brutal oppressors. I doubt, also,

whether the sight of pretty, roomy cottages, gardens gay with flowers, well-cropped allotments, leafy lanes, and green fields, would not send a good many back to town regretting that their lines had not fallen in such pleasant places, or at all events feeling that rural life, if the reward of labour be small, has many and great compensations.

CHAPTER XI.

PEASANT FARMING—A SMALL CULTIVATOR—ILL-REQUITED TOIL—
 CRAVING FOR MORE LAND—SMALL FARMS—INCREASED PRODUCTION NOT NECESSARILY PROFITABLE—GOLD BOUGHT TOO DEARLY—
 MARKET-GARDENING, INTELLIGENCE ESSENTIAL FOR—STATISTICS OF SMALL HOLDINGS—A CAMBRIDGESHIRE PARISH—OTHER
 OCCUPATIONS THAN FARMING—A FOUR-ACRE CULTIVATOR—
 LIFE A HARD STRUGGLE—A SHEPHERD—EARLY EXPERIENCES—
 HARDSHIPS OF FARM-SERVICE—PARISHES IN SUFFOLK—"TWO
 STRINGS TO THE BOW"—CROPS ON SMALL HOLDINGS—CASUALTIES TO STOCK—LOSSES AND ANXIETIES—STORY OF ANOTHER
 SMALL CULTIVATOR—HIS DIFFICULTIES—THE SEASONS—COWS—
 MANURING.

HAPPENING to call upon a farmer in East Suffolk, the conversation turned upon peasant proprietorship and farming. "Would you like to see one of our small cottiers?" said the farmer. "We have not many of them about here, but I can show you one who happens to be working for me now; and a more industrious or a thrifter fellow it would be hard to match in the whole county." Of course I said I should be glad to see him, but asked how it came to pass that the man was working for somebody else and not for himself? The answer was, that there was reciprocity in his doing so. The farmer now and then lent the cottier a plough and horses, charging for the service a sum so

moderate that the cottier now, at hay-time, volunteered his services to the farmer in return. He was a man, too, whose work was worth having. Though not far off sixty years old, no ordinary labourer worked with the intensity and thoroughness of this man, who laboured for others as he was accustomed to labour for himself. Upon his own little six-acre holding, his wife (he had no children) worked in her way almost as hard as he did, and his six acres were excellently farmed. "Then I suppose that between them they do very well?" "You had better hear the man's own story," replied the farmer; "and do you put what questions you choose; I will say nothing." The man came from the hay-field—a fine, tough old fellow, quite bearing out the report made of his capacity for work. He was shrewd and keen, too; and when the reason why we wished to see him was explained, he told us freely and intelligently all we cared to know. The conversation proceeded thus—and I retain his own words as nearly as I can reproduce them from memory: "Yours is a nice bit of land, I hear?" "Yes, it is a tidy little bit; I've nothing to complain of in that way." "How much do you farm?" "Six acres. Two of them I got by courtship" (they came to him through his wife, who had the freehold); "four acres I hire." "What do they cost you a year?" "Rent, rates, and taxes on the six acres come to about £12." "What are you growing just now?" "A bit of wheat, another bit of barley, and some peas and beans." "And you can show some good farming, I hear?" "Yes; I have grown 12 coombs (48 bushels) of wheat an acre, and 14 to 16 coombs of barley. By fork and spade my land is made like a garden. In general, I expect to grow pretty nigh double as much as a farmer grows on his

land.* At least, I should be in a bad way if I didn't." "Do you buy your manure?" "No; I can't afford that. I keep pigs, and get manure from them." "Then do you put more manure into your land than a farmer would?" "No, but I put twice or three times as much labour into it." "Well, then, it ought to pay you pretty well?" "Yes, it ought; but it does not." "Do you mind telling me what profit you make out of your six acres after allowing for your labour?" "I will tell you what I have often told Mr ——" (the farmer) "before. Allowing nothing for my own or my wife's labour (and she works as hard as any man), I don't make 5s. a-week out of my farm. For two years I lost £15 a-year; another year I lost £10. Those were bad years for everybody; the seasons were against us; and what I should have done if I had not had a little to fall back upon, I don't rightly know." "I suppose you mean that you have 5s. a-week left after paying household expenses?" "Indeed I mean nothing of the kind. What I say is, that for twenty years past I have only made a gross profit of 5s. a-week, deducting nothing whatever for labour, cost of living, or clothes; and if you like to call, you will find my books bear me out."

I afterwards discovered that this peasant proprietor had money invested at interest; but that it had not come to him out of the land may be gathered from what followed. "If you want to injure a poor man," he continued, "give him five or six acres of land and make him try to live out

* Upon further inquiries, this statement was not corroborated. I was told by neighbouring farmers that when the peasant grew 12 coombs of wheat, and 14 to 16 coombs of barley, their crops on similar and adjoining land were nearly, if not quite, equal to his; and that the statement that he expected to grow nearly double was certainly not borne out by the facts.

of it. You may tell that to Mr Arch if you like. My opinion is, that if the Union were to give each of its members five acres, and expect them to live out of the land, it would clean burst up in two years. Why, a labourer earning 16s. or 17s. a-week, as the men about here do, is far better off than I am. A labourer has nothing like the care and anxiety. Dear, dear! what a bad time I had last year! My sow died when she farrowed, and I lost most of the pigs. That's the sort of thing that cripples a small farmer, sir, and keeps him awake at nights." "You have no family, I think?" "Lord bless you! if I had had any children, I should have been stumped out long ago. It is only my little bit of property which has kept me going." "But why do you keep on farming if it does not pay?" "Well, I wished to give it up long ago, but somehow I kept on, for I always hoped to get a little more land. Now, if I had about fifteen acres instead of six, I could do much better." "If you cannot make six acres pay, what makes you think you could succeed with fifteen?" "Why, I should then keep a horse, and do my own ploughing. At present I have to do a great part of the work of the horse on my six acres, and that takes a deal out of me. I could also then afford to keep a man. I should have two cows. My wife would milk them, and make the butter, which she would take to market and sell. The flet (skim) milk we should give to the pigs. I should have a breeding sow, and six or seven pigs, which would supply manure enough." "But you would want capital for all this, and would have to begin by borrowing it." I said this before knowing the extent of the man's resources. With a good-humoured smile, he replied, "I think I know where to go to for a

little money." "And how about the farm-buildings?" "Oh, I could run up what buildings I wanted without troubling my landlord." "And if the disease came, and you lost your cows, as you lost your pigs?" "Yes, no doubt that sometimes happens; but I should manage to start afresh, I daresay." "But I hear that some of your neighbours, with twenty or thirty acres, do not get on much better than you do with your six acres? What makes you suppose you would succeed where they have failed?" "Well, the fact is, some people, when they see gold lying on the land, won't stoop to pick it up." He meant, of course, that the land was ill cultivated.

It all ended in a renewal of his craving for a little more land. "If I only had fifteen acres," he said, kindling into sudden enthusiasm, "I should not care to call the Queen my cousin." The rustic wish could find no higher expression. I am not without hope that the result of the interview may be to satisfy the ambition of this sanguine, sturdy old peasant, and give him the chance he covets. Yet the few fifteen and twenty acre farms in the neighbourhood present no encouraging examples of success. I heard of these small farmers "living from hand to mouth," cramped for want of capital, and farming badly in consequence, hard hit by a bad season, ruined by two or three bad seasons in succession, appealing to their landlord and their neighbours by a "brief" (subscription list) if disease carries off their cows, or their horses meet with any accident—in short, struggling on with an ill-rewarded perseverance and tenacity. It may be that the hard-working peasant we saw, shrewd and knowing in things agricultural beyond his fellows, will do better than they are doing; but, after all, it is only the triumph of hope over experience. In

spite of his labour and thrift, he has failed to cultivate his six acres to advantage. He only hopes he may succeed better in cultivating fifteen acres; and no doubt his possession of some spare capital places him high above his neighbours. As he is so hopeful, one hopes he may be able to try the further experiment, and get the nine or ten acres more land on which he has set his heart. Meanwhile, his experience upon the favourite five-acre holding, of which we have lately heard so much, is suggestive. That it is a truthful experience, truthfully told, I am convinced; and, without attempting to found any general conclusion upon an isolated case, it is certain that this peasant proprietor, who could make little or nothing out of six acres of productive land, for two acres of which he had to pay no rent, would laugh to scorn a proposal that he should live upon the produce of five acres of waste land, even if he had it rent-free.*

The farmer afterwards improved the occasion. "Mr Arch," he said, "has several times lately told the towns-

* "My own experience entirely confirms the conclusion to which your special reporter was led by what he saw and heard in the Eastern Counties. A return to peasant farming would be as bad for the peasant as for the country. I have read attentively the best works on the subject—those, for instance, of Mr Thornton and Mr T. E. Cliffe Leslie—but without undergoing any change in my opinion, which is founded on my own experience. That experience is, that the peasant farmer, even if he be proprietor also, is in all respects much worse off than most hired labourers. He has harder work for his wife and family, and, after all, less available income for the purchase of home comforts and the education of his children. He is one of the hardest-worked, poorest, and most miserable men in all England. Long before the Agricultural Labourers' Union was formed, I was and am still a consistent advocate of union. But my idea of the object of union is, not to transform the labourer into either a proprietor or farmer, except so far as that in this country there is an opening for the

people that if each labourer had five acres of land, and could till the soil for himself, beef, mutton, and bread would be cheaper ; and he insults the farmers by telling them that their land is not half cultivated. Is it not obvious that, under a system of peasant farming, all meat except pork would be dear, and breeds of cattle and sheep would degenerate? The price of corn would not be materially affected, for foreign supplies will always rule the price of bread in future—unless we return to the protective system. And, after all, putting together what we have seen to-day, is it not clear that there is a point beyond which expenditure in either labour or manure ceases to be remunerative? There appears to be a limit to the quantity of wheat, or of any other crop, which can be grown per acre. It is doubtful whether corn or roots can be improved in quality or increased in bulk beyond a certain point. Why, then, act as our old friend the crofter has done, as though there were no such limit? Why farm as though a definite return were certain from any expenditure, however excessive? The wisest and cleverest of farmers will tell you that it is only by closely calculating and cutting down expenses that farming can be made to pay. Yet Mr Arch, and men of his stamp, lead the mechanics of the towns to believe that prodigal expenditure upon the land will infallibly secure a prodigal return. To a certain extent our

best men in every occupation to raise themselves, but to improve his condition as a hired labourer ; and for this end not to encourage strikes for an increase of wages, still less to lead wayfaring men astray by such Will-o'-the-wisps as an equal partition of land, the alienation of the higher classes, whether clergymen, landowners, or farmers, by indiscriminate abuse, or the identifying the cause of the peasantry with any one particular party, either religious or political."—*Rev. Canon Girdlestone, 'The Times,' August 21, 1874.*

peasant farmer has made the same mistake. He has been prodigal of his labour, and what is the result? To use his own expression, he 'has picked up the gold' which other men would have let lie; but he has bought this gold too dear. Then, does the community derive any permanent benefit from labour so squandered? If you put the current market price upon this man's labour, you will find that the wheat he grows costs him much more than it fetches in the market. In other words, spade-husbandry cannot compete with modern agriculture. Is it not, then, a misdirection and waste of forces for spade-husbandmen to grow wheat which costs them 70s. or 80s. a quarter, whereas the large farmer or the foreigner can grow it for 60s. or less. The question solves itself, for our peasant himself admits that he could not have carried on this system of farming were he dependent upon it for a livelihood." *

* "The rent of land in Ireland is much lower than it is in England. The standard of comfort among the labouring class, as well as among the class immediately above them, is much lower in Ireland than in England. These circumstances are much in favour of Irish peasant cultivators, as compared with a similar class in England. Yet the agricultural statistics of Ireland show that holdings between one acre and fifteen acres in extent have been progressively decreasing since 1845. Holdings from one acre to five acres are of the class that would probably be contemplated for the English agricultural labourer. But we find that between 1841 and 1851 the decrease in the number of that class in Ireland was 222,353; and between 1861 and 1871 the decrease was 10,660. Extending our inquiry to holdings between five and fifteen acres, we find that between 1841 and 1851 the decrease was 60,945; and between 1861 and 1871 the decrease was 12,548. These figures appear to supply conclusive evidence that small farmers in these countries cannot, under ordinary circumstances, maintain their ground, and that consolidation is a natural process which will go forward, despite of all artificial restrictions that may be interposed to prevent its operation. It will be said by some persons that evictions have very naturally contributed to the diminution in the number of hold-

For one element the farmer did not allow. As an abstract proposition, or if the peasant's surplus labour were sure of being otherwise utilised, the reasoning just presented may be free from flaw. But how if, save for the inducement offered by land which he rents or owns, the peasant never puts forth his full strength? Then the community loses the benefit of an unemployed reserve of labour; and whether this might not be more profitably bestowed in other channels is a point of little practical moment.

To the experience of this crofter, I can add some more instances of the same nature in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, premising that it has not been my aim to bolster up any theory as to the policy or impolicy of small holdings, but simply to record the facts as I find them. The danger of forming hasty conclusions is as great in this as in other things agricultural. I have talked with men who, beginning with a bit of land, have raised themselves from the farm-labouring class into positions of fair independ-

ings in Ireland; but, with the statistics of evictions before me, I maintain that they had no appreciable effect on it whatever. The most industrious of the small holders are, moreover, those most disposed to part with their farms, in the hope of either bettering their condition by getting larger farms in their own country, or, failing this, by emigration. The case of the prosperity of the peasant cultivators of a district of Flanders is often brought before the public of these countries, without, however, stating the peculiarities which there insure success. The proposed introduction of any such system on a large scale into the United Kingdom is one of the most visionary schemes that can enter into the imagination of the wildest enthusiast, except that for the reclamation of waste lands by the State, to be afterwards parcelled out into small farms. Schemes of reclamation have been tried again and again with uniform failure for the result, wherever the operations have been on an extended scale."—*Mr John Sproule, 'The Times,' August 21, 1874.*

ence, though at starting they had little more than the proverbial twopence-halfpenny in their pockets. It follows that there are openings by which even peasants may raise themselves into the class above them. But, in my experience, the cases are very rare in which men have done so simply by "farming," in the ordinary acceptation of the word. Sometimes they have cultivated their land as a market-garden; and then they must have a market handy, taking their own vegetables for sale, or having special facilities for disposing of them to advantage. The average English peasant is not qualified for this method of cultivation and sale of produce, which demands a quicker intelligence than he generally possesses. Besides, if vegetable gardens were multiplied to any large extent in the neighbourhood of large and small towns, the markets would soon be overstocked, and prices would cease to be remunerative. At present, market-gardening answers where the small cultivator is exceptionally clever, industrious, and alert. More frequently, however, the peasant farmer works on the neighbouring farms, or is a jobber, carter, carrier, keeping his eyes well open, and turning his hand to anything by which he can make a few shillings. In some cases which came under my notice men had bought threshing-machines, and took them about for hire among the small holders in the neighbourhood, threshing by the coomb and supplying the labour. One of these men had three such machines going—"a shrewd, close fellow," said my informant, "who on most days works from 6 in the morning till 9 at night." Such men cannot be kept down. They will rise, "as the sparks fly upwards," from whatever class they may be born into.

A few details, however, will be more instructive than

any general statement. Here is a sketch of a Cambridgeshire parish in which small holdings abound, and out of 113 farms only 20 exceed 100 acres. The extent of the farms there is as follows: 30 holdings under 10 acres; 24 over 10 and under 20 acres; 25 over 20 and under 50 acres; 14 over 50 and under 100; 14 over 100 and under 200; 4 over 200 and under 300; and 2 upwards of 300 acres. Of the 30 holders under 10 acres, one man got his living (so I was told) entirely from the land, farming it in the ordinary way—that is, raising corn and roots, and keeping pigs and a cow. The remaining 29 employ themselves as follows: Six carters, carriers, and flymen, four turf-dealers, one coprolite-digger, two fruit-dealers, five publicans, four farm-labourers, one shopkeeper, two dealers in stock, one butcher, while three hold more land in an adjoining parish. Of the 24 holders of between 10 and 20 acres, five get a living entirely from the land; the remaining 19 have other occupations—namely, one sedge-dealer, one parish officer, one labourer, three publicans, two dealers in stock, three carters, carriers, and flymen, two flour-dealers, one brickmaker, one fruiterer, one grocer, and three hold more land in an adjoining parish.

I was anxious to see the one man out of the 30 holding less than ten acres who was said to make his living entirely from the land, especially as he farmed no more than four acres. I found that he had 3 a. 1 r. 38 p. of his own land, and hired 1 r. 36 p. besides. The land was good corn-growing land, and was well cultivated. He had this year grown three acres of wheat, yielding ten coombs (five quarters) an acre, and worth £1 per coomb; but usually he did not expect to grow as much as ten coombs. Then he had an acre of sainfoin, which was consumed by his cow, while

the pigs supplied him with manure. Two or three years ago he lost a cow worth £18 from milk-fever. This was a terrible blow. He had built himself, with borrowed money, a substantial cottage, the land and house being mortgaged as security for the loan. He had no children, and therefore lived at a small expense. But this man, a skilful farmer in his way, who toiled early and late, and bore among his neighbours the reputation of being a sober, indefatigable worker, complained of scanty means and hard life. At all events, he made a living out of his land? No, he answered. His wife was thought a clever milliner in the village, and earned a little money in this way. As for himself, he worked for the neighbouring farmers when he could get a job and had nothing particular to do at home. Then at harvest-time a farmer helped him by the loan of a horse and waggon, and he did a fortnight's harvesting for the farmer. He hired a horse for ploughing, harrowing, rolling, and drilling, and then did as much work as he could manage off his own land. He thought he worked twice as hard as most labouring men. If, he said, he had to trust to the profits of his four acres, he should make a poor living. A farmer, who knew the man well, told me he was worth a pound a-week as a hired labourer, and knew well how to make the most of his land. This seemed probable, for he told me he had taken five white crops in succession off the half-acre he hired, until at last the owner, a peasant who had mortgaged it (the land being now for sale under foreclosure), came and expressed himself very freely upon this exhaustive method of cultivation.

Here, then, was an end to the only case cited in the parish in which a man maintained himself wholly from the cultivation of a small plot of land. Combining the two

callings of peasant farmer and labourer, and working twice as hard as an ordinary labourer, this man, with his wife's earnings, no doubt made a tolerably comfortable living. I gathered, however, that the great advantage of his position in his eyes was its independence. He was at nobody's beck and call. He had his cares, but he was his own master; and there is a joy in the sight of a man's own crops, growing on his own land and the fruit of his own toil, which seems to repay him for much care and labour, and to be more valued than a larger money reward coupled with dependence. The other cases in which small farmers were described to me as living out of the land were these. I indicate them by letters: A farms nearly 11 acres of hired land, and until this year had a larger holding. B hires close on 14 acres. C, a widow, farms 10 acres, partly orchard and pasture—her son, a labourer, being with her, and helping to maintain her. D hires 12 acres. He is an old man; and his son, a small farmer in the parish, does the work on his land for nothing. E hires 16½ acres, and formerly cultivated considerably more. His son lives with him, and does the work. I had some talk with E, a worn man bent with rheumatism, who from his dress was not to be distinguished from the poorest peasant. Indeed I have seen few labourers worse clothed. According to him, again, life was a hard struggle. For some of the land he pays £3 an acre, a higher rent by 20s. than the large farmers would give for it. Though his son works on the land, at times, of course, hired labour is necessary. A blind old horse is used at plough, and sometimes a donkey in front of it. The donkey, which was in the farmyard, keeps the horse straight, and is useful also in the muck-cart. The dry

season had been a very bad one for the farmer's corn crops, and he only grew $7\frac{1}{2}$ coombs of wheat per acre; whereas one of the large farmers in the parish tells me that upon no better land he grew from nine to ten coombs. Such a crop of corn could never pay at anything like the prices then ruling. Two cows and some pigs are kept, and the farmer and his son are as thrifty and industrious as men can be. But the poor fellow was evidently, to use his own phrase, "going down hill," and had lately been obliged to sell a few acres of freehold land which his father had owned before him.*

* "As surveyor to the diocese of Norwich under the Dilapidations Act, it is my duty to visit small glebe farms belonging to the benefices, and I inspect many in the course of the year. The number of livings in the diocese is nearly 1000. These glebe farms are frequently several miles distant from the parishes to which they belong, and, by some former mysterious arrangements, have been bought to augment poor livings. They vary from 10 to 40 acres—the average is under 20 acres—and they are but one grade removed from peasant farms. I have no hesitation in saying that, take the tenants as a body, they are the most needy and hard-working set of men among the agricultural class. They are, in fact, labourers, and that of the most diligent and self-denying kind. Rising generally at 4 A.M., they seldom cease work until they go to bed at 8 P.M., and their meals are of the most frugal character. It would not do for me to publicly name any of them, or I could mention scores who drag on all their lives on a poor pittance in this way. Not more than a month ago I went to a glebe farm in Suffolk of 18 acres, belonging to a very small living near Ipswich, several miles from the benefice, and as my duty is, went into every cupboard and corner of the house. Everything was as clean and tidy as could be desired, but the furniture was of the poorest, and no bit of meat—not even a bit of pork—was to be found in the pantry. The farmer, if he can be dignified by the name, was most civil, and his wife very obliging. Having had a long drive and a hard morning's work I was glad of the offer of some bread-and-cheese and beer. The beer brought to me even Sir Wilfrid Lawson could not object to—it was but one remove from coloured water; the bread was good, but the very small bit of Dutch cheese produced was

One cannot help noticing with interest and sympathy the struggles of some of the peasants to get a living, apart from farm-labour. One very old man I met had taken to sheep-keeping, though he never had a scrap of land of his own. He began life as a shepherd, and 30 years ago bought four "crones" (ewes culled from the flock as un-serviceable), and started on his own account. In the first year his four ewes, by careful tending, brought him six lambs. This was a good beginning. In his spare time he worked for various employers; but as his flock gradually increased, he spent his whole time in looking after them. For the most part they fed along the roadside; and in those

very hard, so I mildly asked for a piece of butter, when they told me that they kept a cow and made butter once a-week, but that they sold it all, as they could not afford to keep it for their own consumption, and regretted that, as I had not visited them on churning-day, they had none to give me. It is true this man had eight children, and his two eldest daughters, he told me, were out as servants-of-all-work. These farms mostly belong to poor benefices, and the clergy who hold them are the very reverse of your kind-hearted landlord, with his pet peasant tenant. They screw up the rents to the very uttermost they can squeeze out of their poor tenants, and get 40s., 50s., or 60s. an acre for land, while much better in an adjoining field is let to a large tenant-farmer for little more than half the money. Besides this, they have to pay rates and taxes, which the labourer does not; and the parson of the parish is surprised that they do not contribute something to the coal or clothing club, because 'they occupy land.' The natural question is, Why do they suffer all this? The causes are old associations and pride. Many of them have had their little farms handed down to them from their fathers, and cannot bring themselves to think of moving; while the fact of being a farmer and not a labourer leads them to endure privations which the latter would rebel against. My object in making these remarks is to supplement your special correspondent's admirable letters, and to state that even very small tenant-farmers, one remove from peasant farmers, cannot live—they only exist."

—*Mr R. Makilwaine Phipson, F.S.A., county Surveyor of Norfolk, and Surveyor to the Diocese of Norfolk; 'The Times,' Aug. 25. 1874.*

days no objection was raised by road surveyors or waywardens. Occasionally, he bought a bit of feed of one of the farmers, and at night his sheep were folded in some farmer's field. By selling a portion of the lambs and ewes, with the wool, every year, he maintained himself in tolerable comfort till he became too old to look after a flock. So two years ago he disposed of his sheep, which then numbered 40, big and little, and fetched £2 a-head. He was now living upon the proceeds, which, with his little savings, he thought would keep him out of the workhouse till he was called away. His age he was not sure about, except that he was a goodish bit over 80. Time with him dated from his being first drawn for the militia in 1811, when he must have been at least 18 years old, and his memory was clear as to events which happened at the beginning of the century. "My father was a labourer," said the old man, "and worked for a farmer in Norfolk. There were five of us children. My father earned 9s. a week, and that was when flour was once 7s., and at another time 5s. a stone. As soon as we were old enough to do anything, each of us had to keep a spinning-wheel going. Rye-bread was our usual fare, with a bit of 'flet cheese' (made from skim-milk). All the meat we saw from year's end to year's end was half a pound of fat pork on Sundays. There was just a bite for each of us and a mouthful over; and I used to save my morsel till the last, so that I might leave off with a good taste in my mouth. On the same day, just to show it was a Sunday, we used to have a little wheaten flour. Sometimes, as a change from rye-bread, we had pollard, mixed with water in a pail, and then fried into cakes in the frying-pan. Potatoes were rare in those days. At all events, poor people did not get many, and

the labourers' wives used to boil nettles, charlock, and 'fat hen' (atriplex or orach, a weed of the spinach tribe). These were common food; and the old man thought they were as wholesome, and perhaps contained as much nourishment, as potatoes. His first work was as "page" to a shepherd. In those days the shepherds fed and paid the boys they wanted to tend the sheep, and rye-bread steeped in milk was at first the only food he got. A hard service it must have been for all such "pages." "Many is the time," said the old man, "I have eaten my rye-bread from my arms like this" (showing them stretched across his breast), "because I could not feel my hands for the cold. Many is the time, too, I have tried to keep warm by huddling against an old sheep. The flet cheese was often so hard that I have had to cut it with a hatchet. As for the sheep, they hadn't such food provided for them as they have now. In winter there was little to eat except what God Almighty sent for them, and when the snow was thick on the ground they ate the ling or died off. Sheep were not of much account then. I have known lambs sold at 1s. 6d. apiece. When I got into a farmhouse we lived better, and had three pints of beer a-day, with as much 'smalls' as we liked. The farmer then worked like his men, and all messed together. He hadn't much more book-learning than we shepherds, who could neither read nor write. Once a-year the sheep were told off, and the tally was kept in this way: We cut notches round a stick, one notch for each sheep; then we split the stick in two, and the farmer kept one half and the shepherd the other till next year." "And were the people contented with their rye-bread and nettles?" "More contented than they are nowadays, I reckon."

From Cambridgeshire I will take my readers to a parish in Suffolk—not selected for the purpose, but taken haphazard—in which there are nine small farmers. I do not mention names or places, because the details are sometimes not such as poor men care should be coupled with their names, and because these details were sometimes given to me upon condition that they should not be so published as to identify persons. In this Suffolk parish, then, A farms 29 acres, B 24 acres, C $22\frac{1}{2}$; and, so far as I know, these three men follow no other business. We then fall to holdings of half the size. D, who rents $10\frac{1}{4}$ acres, is a carrier; E, also a carrier, rents $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres; F, a carrier and carter, $4\frac{1}{4}$ acres; G, a coal-dealer on a small scale, has $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres; H, who has 5 acres, keeps cows and buys up butter to sell again; J, an engine-driver, cultivates 2 acres. These are the small cultivators of the parish, and you will see they are not dependent on the land for their whole living. I believe the parish may be taken as a fair sample of neighbouring parishes where small holders exist. With very rare exceptions these men do not expect to live out of the land, or try to do so. They have two strings to their bow, and this is a point on which it is always necessary to make inquiry before coming to the conclusion that a “peasant farmer” supports himself by his holding alone. Doubtful statements are also sometimes made—quite in good faith—as to the produce of small cultivators. One swallow does not make a summer, but one large crop in an exceptional year is sometimes cited, with natural pride in a man’s own handiwork, as though it were grown every year, and might always be reckoned on. The sturdy old peasant who told me before harvest he expected to grow “twice as much” as an ordinary farmer, did not do

so this year. So, at least, I am told on good authority. "His is as good a bit of land as any in the parish," writes a farmer; "but there were quite as good crops on similar land farmed on a large scale. I had scores of acres with crops as good as his, and I had also 100 acres of poor land which hardly paid for cutting."

Here are a few cases collected in another parish in Suffolk. Only a few days before my visit, the wife of one small farmer had been taking from farm to farm a "petition," founded upon the loss of a cow. On a large farm a certain percentage of casualties is expected and allowed for, but the small cultivator has no reserve of capital, and the death of a horse or cow is a sore calamity, which often drives him to the charity of his neighbours, or puts a finishing stroke to his career. In this case the petitioner rented about 12 acres of light land, for which he paid only 20s. an acre. Another man hired 9 acres of land of the same quality, and used to go "into the Shires" in the season to work in drilling. By these expeditions he earned a little money, and his wife was as industrious as himself. "It was impossible," said my informant, "for any man to be more sober or careful. As for work, none was too hard for him; I believed he killed himself by work. But, poor fellow, he was always in difficulties, always wanting help, and when he died he owed me £60." Another man had inherited a little farm of 5 acres. He also used to go "into the Shires" to drill. Still, he could not pay his way; so he sold his land to a farmer on condition of being allowed to hire it at a rent equal to 5 per cent upon the purchase-money. "I am afraid," said my informant, "he has pretty nearly worked himself out again." In another case, a man pays £19 rent for 2 acres of land and a cot-

tage. He makes his land a market-garden, keeps a pony and cart, buys butter, fowls, and eggs, and sells them with his vegetables at a neighbouring market-town. This man makes a fair living. Another peasant farmer, who had to give up his holding, was now employed by one of the farmers as a bailiff. He had grown wheat, barley, and roots or green crops in the ordinary way, but could do nothing else; while a neighbour, who kept a horse and cart, and laid himself out for raising early potatoes and other vegetables, made a living. This man's wife attended the market and sold the garden stuff, with eggs and butter; and these are articles of produce which might certainly be cheapened with advantage in all populous places, but then increased competition and cheapness would play havoc with the small profits of the small cultivators. The farmer who gave me some of these particulars was clear as to the moral. "Hardly any man can live," he said, "who grows the ordinary crops upon a small holding. By such gardening as you have in the suburbs of London—a quick succession of choice vegetables, and a ready sale for them—a man may do well on such a holding. Or if he has an orchard, or does a little jobbing besides farming, he may pull through. But to manage these things well you must have mind as well as matter. Hard work is one good thing, but it is not enough. A man must be pushing as well as industrious. He must have his wits about him, and know how to buy and sell to advantage. Otherwise he will sink, as I have seen many honest, industrious fellows sink, to my sorrow."

This farmer was not of the type often drawn by delegates—a man jealous of any attempt by the peasant to get land, discouraging such attempts from interested motives,

and anxious to keep labourers "in their place." He had helped some of the small tillers of the soil in their difficulties, and readily pointed to one—but only one—instance in the neighbourhood in which a peasant farmer, by thrift, industry, and good fortune, had added field to field, till he now rented 70 or 80 acres. The farmer himself had a story to tell, and a very creditable one it was. "I started farming," he said, "some twenty-eight years since, upon 21 acres of land. I had to keep my two horses, and could not make the land worth much. I added 20 or 30 acres, and then it did me little or no good." In time he was able to extend his occupation, and now he could point to a flock of some thousand sheep. But he had always had some other business, and was at no time forced to rely on the profits of farming. Here is the story volunteered by a man in humbler circumstances—a small cultivator, who, like him, fortunately has another staff to lean on besides the 6 acres he tills: "I have a little business as a dealer, which does not take me much from home, and I work from sunlight to sunset on my farm. This very morning I went to work at four, and I shall work till dark—perhaps then by moonlight. Farm-labourers don't do that, and they earn more money than I do. For the last four years £13 a-year, on the average, is all I have got out of my land. This year I shall do better, because, by good luck, my potatoes are good; and I hope I shall show a balance of £17 or £20. No, that is not allowing anything for my own labour. I throw that in. Seven or eight shillings a-week will be about all that will come out of the land for me. I put up a few sheds myself. My farm and cottage will cost me this year: Rent, rates, &c., £23; horse-labour, hired, £7; man's labour, hired, £13; corn-seed

(three coomb), £4, 10s. ; potato-seed (seven sacks), £2, 10s. ; repairs, interest, and insurance, £5—total, £55. I charge here nothing for manure, which I get from pigs kept in the course of my jobbing business. To set against these outgoings I have: $1\frac{1}{2}$ acre wheat, very good crop, worth £25 ; $1\frac{1}{2}$ acre beans, very light crop, only seven coomb, worth £7 ; $1\frac{1}{2}$ acre roots, light crop, worth £10 ; $\frac{3}{4}$ acre potatoes (good crop), worth £30 ; $\frac{3}{4}$ acre pasture (hay sold), worth £2—total, £74. This leaves £19 to the good for all my labour and trouble.* My land is all deeply and well cultivated. It has plenty of manure, but the subsoil is gravelly, and the seasons beat me. My wheat was good ; my beans were very light—they died too fast. The pigs will eat both beans and roots. Pigs won't pay a sight this year, but they give plenty of manure. You wonder why I put so much work into the land when it gives me so little back? Well, I would not carry on the farm if it weren't a sort of hobby of mine. I like farming, and I like the work, and I have got a little money—though not by farming, depend upon it. I don't care what people say. A man can't live and bring up a family on a 5-acre farm. His expenses beat him. He can't make return enough. Corn doesn't pay in small plots. 'Taters pay if they don't get 'the cholera.' Why don't I keep a cow? Because my land's a hot gravel ; it looks good, too,

* "Poor old fellow," writes a farmer, "he 'reckoned his chickens before they were hatched.' His wheat, instead of being worth £25" (he calculated on about 32s. a coomb), "was sold at about 21s. ; and his potatoes, or a portion of them, 'got the cholera' after all. They looked well when taken up, but when the clamps were opened after the lapse of a few weeks, more or less disease appeared among the roots. I doubt if £20, rather than £30, is not, after all, their actual value."

on the top, and would deceive any one. But look at my pasture now. Why, it's as dry and bare as the road. Not that I'm not fond of cows. I am, and have had lots. At last I gave 'em up, and I'll tell you why. Perhaps a dry time sets in. Then on my little bit of pasture there's no grass, and no food for the cow. I cannot buy food, except at a high price, because other farmers all about me are in the same fix. So I've to sell my cow at a loss, and have done so over and over again. Can you over-manure land? In course you can. Why, that's half what's the matter with my land this year. I 'mucked' it well last autumn, and just where I mucked it most the drought has laid most hold of the corn. How deep do I cultivate? Why, if I plough, I plough and subsoil; if I dig, I double dig—that is, two spud deep. Can't do better than that, can I? What do I think of giving a 5-acre farm to every industrious peasant? Why, I think it would be nonsense. Now I'll tell you how that notion has likely come about. A man sees an allotment of 'taters, and a capital good crop. 'So,' says he, '5 acres like them 'ere would pay right well.' Yes; but suppose every one grew 'taters. Would they pay then? I reckon not. The price would be so low that it would not pay to grow them at all. Besides, they don't always pay. Sometimes they get the cholera. I have no patience with people who talk such nonsense. I tell you what it is,—a man must be either a labourer earning good wages if he is worth 'em, or he must be a larger farmer than I am, unless he has private means. The labourer should have an allotment of 20 or 30 rods, which will be quite enough to fill up his spare time. Stock pay on a large scale, but it is a risky business for a poor man. If a man like me gets disease among his pigs, or loses a cow, it

is like to break him ; whereas the big farmer can stand his ground. If you go in for stock-keeping, you must have surplus capital and run your chance." "Perhaps you have had a run of ill-luck ? Such things happen to the best of us." "No, I can't say that. Here I've been a matter of twenty years, and people round about know me well enough. If you ask them, I think they will say I'm a tidy farmer" (which was quite true ; he had a good name for getting as much from the land as it could yield). "But if you think other folks could do better, there are a good many 5 and 10 acre farmers near here. Do you go and ask them whether they live out of their land. I know they don't. They can't. They are all like me ; they have something else to look to. One goes about buying fowls ; one is a carrier ; another breaks colts ; another is a sheep-clipper ; another is a jobber, and will buy and sell pretty well anything. Don't go on talking stuff about a man getting a living out of 5 acres, because he can't do it." I do not offer these opinions as decisive upon the question of small holdings ; but they are very strong opinions by a man well entitled to form and express them.

CHAPTER XII.

PEASANT FARMING CONTINUED—CASE OF JOHN SILLETT—SHOP APPRENTICE—HABERDASHER—TASTE FOR RURAL LIFE—COBBETT'S 'COTTAGE ECONOMY'—A RISKY EXPERIMENT—BREAKING UP PASTURE—THE NATIONAL LAND COMPANY—A TWO-ACRE FREEHOLD—STATEMENT OF PRODUCE—SILLETT NO "PEASANT FARMER"—EXCEPTIONAL ADVANTAGES—FRUGALITY—FARM-BUILDINGS—HUSBANDMAN CONTRASTED WITH TRADESMAN—RELATIVE INDEPENDENCE—SMALL FARMS—WOODBIDGE—"THE WALKS"—WASTE LAND—HOW FAR AVAILABLE FOR CULTIVATION—A PEASANT'S OPINION—A FARMER'S EXPOSTULATION—UNPROFITABLE CROPS—HEATH-LAND—UNFIT FOR PLOUGHING—VALUE OF, FOR PASTURE—STOCK-KEEPING—FOOD RESULTS OF PEASANT HOLDINGS—SMALL FARMS OFTEN BADLY FARMED—AND UNREMUNERATIVE—STRUGGLES OF SMALL FARMERS—AVERAGE EXTENT OF HOLDINGS.

I HAVE given some cases adverse to peasant farming. I now record an experience of another kind. My attention was called to the case of John Sillett, who (it was said) had demonstrated the success of the small-farm system upon a two-acre plot at Kelsale, near Saxmundham, in Suffolk. Accordingly, I visited John Sillett, and heard an interesting story, which carries us a long time back and revives familiar memories. Sillett was a native of Kelsale, and was apprenticed to a grocer and draper. He afterwards filled various situations as a draper in London and Birmingham; was then in business six years on his own account in Suffolk; next kept a haberdasher's shop

in London ; and, finally, settled down in business in his native village. A training behind the counter was not, one would think, a good training for field-work. But Sillett was fond of a rural life, and used to read with avidity any works on husbandry which came in his way. One day he read in a newspaper some pithy directions—"How to keep a cow and pig upon an acre of land." He thought, by following them, he saw his way to a change of occupation ; and as they had so powerful an effect upon his mind, perhaps they may be worth preserving here :—

"1. Never let the cow out of the cow-house. Carry her food and water to her. 3. Do not keep one foot of land in pasture. 4. Dig your land instead of ploughing it. 5. Never throw away anything that can be turned into manure. 6. Keep your land well weeded and collect a large dung-hill. A small cow, which is best for a cottager, will eat from 70 lb. to 80 lb. of good moist food of the following kinds in a day : Lucerne or clover, and the leaves of yellow beet or mangel-wurzel from the beginning of spring to the end of autumn ; and the roots of yellow beet or mangel-wurzel, swedish turnips, potatoes, and straw, from the end of autumn to the beginning of spring. If the cow is curried once a-day, it will increase the quantity of milk. To procure the above-mentioned crops you must have plenty of manure, which you will obtain by careful management. Rushes, potato-stalks, and weeds before they seed, should be industriously collected for the cow's litter."

But even this valuable information was eclipsed by some given in Mr Cobbett's work on 'Cottage Economy.' "Of all the novelties this work contains," says John Sillett, "the part which describes how to keep a cow off a quarter of an acre of land attracted my attention the most. This article

quite astonished me, and was what I never heard of before, and what no one would believe could be done. The description given how to produce the food for the cow off this quarter of an acre is very interesting and useful, and I shall ever feel grateful to the immortal William Cobbett for the valuable information his 'Cottage Economy' contains. It is from this excellent book that I learnt all my first principles of sowing and transplanting." I am quoting from a pamphlet written by John Sillett himself, for he in time became an author. It will be proper, first of all, however, to note how he became a landowner and cultivator. His father was possessed of two acres of land, which were sold under his will, and which his son purchased, giving the high price of £118 an acre, besides the legal expenses. The land was freehold, tithe-free, and land-tax redeemed, and entitled the owner to a vote for the county. It had been bought thirty years before by the father for £130; so that "the unearned increment of value" here was over £100. The land was in pasture, and its new owner at once set about following No. 3 of the directions just reprinted, by gradually breaking up the pasture. His neighbours wondered and condemned. It was a beautiful piece of pasture, and they were quite sure that John Sillett did not know what he was about—that he would soon be sorry for what he was doing, and "give it up." Indeed they had some reason for this belief, because, before beginning work on this piece of land, John Sillett had never dug a rod of land in his life, and was so ignorant of husbandry that he could not even distinguish the different seeds. But he had a strong will, and was determined to persevere in his own way. About this time Mr Feargus O'Connor was planning to regenerate England by means of small farms,

and published a work on the way to manage such farms. "I at once concluded," says John Sillett, "that this was the very book I wanted, and immediately commissioned a friend in London to get it for me. As soon as I received it I read it over several times with much interest, and was so delighted with the contents of this work that I determined at once to give up my business and devote the whole of my time to the cultivation of my land." He did so about the year 1843; and his success in his new calling was cited in Parliament, and became a text upon which Mr O'Connor was eloquent. John Sillett gave evidence before the committee of the House of Commons appointed to report upon the scheme of the National Land Company, and published a little work called 'A New and Practical System of Fork or Spade Husbandry,' which went through five editions. My quotations are from a new and enlarged edition which appeared in 1848. On the title-page is an extract from one of Mr Feergus O'Connor's speeches:—

"If you want fuller information as to the value of the system, read Mr Sillett's admirable practical work upon the subject. There you will find that he gave £236 for two acres of bad land, without a stone or building upon it, and that he would not accept £4 a-week to leave his two acres of land and go to any other employment."

On the cover of the pamphlet there are advertisements of Mr O'Connor's "elaborate treatises in explanation of the National Land Company and the National Land and Labour Bank" in connection with it; advertisements of his treatises on labour, and the small-farm system and the banking system by which it is intended to be developed; and of three publications which are said to "give a succinct and connected narrative of the important proceedings

of the Chartist body during the eventful period that has followed the French Revolution." However, John Sillett, to do him justice, avoids politics in his little book and sticks to agriculture. He gives a statement of the produce of his little freehold in 1847, after allowing for the consumption of his family—himself, his wife, and two children—and after keeping two cows, fattening one calf and rearing one, fattening two pigs, and retaining seeds for next year's cropping. This produce is the more remarkable, because the season in 1847, though very favourable for grain, was a trying one for roots, owing to the severe drought, and John Sillett lost the whole of his spring crop of cabbage plants, nearly 15,000, the seed of which he sowed in the latter part of July. With this explanation I now give the account:—

Produce of two cows, after family's consumption, fattening one calf, and weaning one,	£29 12 8
One calf fattened, weighing 9 stone, at 8s. 2d. per stone of 14 lb.,	3 12 6
Skin, head, feet, &c.,	0 16 0
One-year-old heifer,	5 0 0
One fat pig of 8 stone of 14 lb., at 8s.,	3 4 0
Twenty sacks of potatoes, at 8s.,	8 0 0
Twelve bushels of early potatoes, at 5s.,	3 0 0
Seven thousand cabbages, at ½d.,	14 11 8
Twelve pecks of onions, at 1s.,	0 12 0
Various seeds, vegetables, &c.,	5 15 0
	<hr/>
	£74 3 10
Deduct rent for land at 5 per cent on purchase-money (including expenses), £250,	£12 10 0
Rent for house,	8 0 0
Rates, taxes, &c.,	2 12 0
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	23 2 0
Net balance of profit for the year,	£51 1 10

It will be seen that this statement does not purport to be a detailed balance-sheet, and items should properly be added to both sides of the account. For example, the whole produce of the land is not shown. Besides the vegetables just mentioned, mangel-wurzel, swede turnips, drumhead cabbages, and hay and straw were grown. These were consumed by the cows and heifer, along with ten sacks of potatoes, a portion of which was eaten by the family, and the remainder, with eight bushels of beans, grown between the potatoes, was used for fattening the two pigs. The wheat grown for family consumption was 16 bushels. A part of it was grown between the cabbages, the other portion in rows, or dibbled eight inches apart. That which was grown between the cabbages is said to have been quite equal in quantity to the wheat grown in the ordinary way, though it occupied but half the space of ground. The quantity of land which the whole occupied was a quarter of an acre. At this time, according to the pamphlet, only an acre and a quarter was under cultivation, the rest being pasture. Sillett describes his method of producing four crops off the same piece of ground within the year, consisting of cabbages, wheat, potatoes, and swedes—or three crops, consisting of potatoes, beans, and swedes; and either method, if successful, would help to explain the abundant produce shown in this statement. Unfortunately, he is unable now to supply fuller details of profit and outlay, and the pamphlet contains only the one balance-sheet just given. He is now a man approaching 70, still hale and strong, but happily no longer dependent on his two acres, and able to hire labour when he wants it. "I hoped," he said, "that people had forgotten me." He meant as an example to be quoted

in what was once a great controversy, and has not quite ceased to be so still. But the world cannot afford to lose sight of men who, in their way, have made themselves famous. I wish I could think he had solved the problem of small holdings. But he is not, and never was, "a peasant farmer." He was a man full of resources, possessing an indomitable will and some education, with wits sharpened by business pursuits and contact with business men in many cities, who set himself to conquer the difficulties of a new calling, bringing to it a taste for the work, and such thrift, industry, and energy as belong to few men in any class of life. His financial statement shows, at starting, a belief that wheat could not be grown to advantage on two acres, and that it would be necessary to grow garden stuff for sale in the neighbouring town. But since then, allotments have been given to farm-labourers in the neighbourhood, and there is no longer the same outlet for such produce; or rather, one should say, increased production has made this species of cultivation less remunerative. This is just the process which would repeat itself elsewhere if such holdings were multiplied. I fear, too, that, considered as a balance-sheet, the statement cannot be considered either as an average of profit or even as the net profit of an exceptional year. "If I had ever made a pound a-week," John Sillett told me, "I should have thought myself a gentleman;" and, by the side of his published statement for 1847, such a statement is significant. Still, it is clear that he maintained for years a noble struggle, and did wonders with his two acres. It is only fair, therefore, by the side of the many failures in small cultivation, to chronicle his success, though the things which contributed to his success should also be carefully noted. One advantage he pos-

sessed—he was able to borrow a little money from friends when he wanted it, though it was punctually repaid. Another was that his land, instead of being “bad,” as Mr O’Connor described it, was of peculiarly fine quality—a friable loam, which gave back with interest whatever was put into it.* Then, besides the personal advantages already indicated, John Sillett had an industrious, thrifty wife, and was him-

* “These two acres,” writes an East Suffolk correspondent who well remembers the beginning of John Sillett’s husbandry, “were a very fine piece of old pasture-land, and when broken up with fork they produced some of the most extraordinary crops ever seen. They continued to do so for several years, a result common enough under these favourable circumstances. But every farmer, great or small, knows that if he has a very productive piece of land, and exhausts it with continual and extra cropping, he must return an equivalent in good manure to keep it up to the mark, and Sillett found to his cost that he could not do so. I remember his cows being sent into the by-ways to forage for themselves and nibble up a dinner, and the wags of the village used to hang their caps upon the poor animals’ hip-bones. As to the ‘sky-blue and streaky’ liquid given by cows fed upon mangel-leaves and chopped straw, I wonder what sort of dairy-produce could come from such a diet-table. I also remember the following dialogue in the Suffolk vernacular between a neighbouring farmer and his backus (¹) boy:—‘I sa, Mester?’ ‘Well, bor.’ (²) ‘If thar ain’t Sillett’s owd razor-backed hogs broke out agin. That thar owd sarpint of a sow ha’ got her snout under the gate, and lifted it off the jimmers, (³) and I ketched a glint (⁴) of the rest on ’em skrigglin’ (⁵) thar way through the shruff (⁶) in the hedge holl (⁷) and making another gap right atwin (⁸) the stub-apple (⁹) and the touch-wood (¹⁰) tree, and tha ha’ bin’ a pamplin’ (¹¹) all over the land, and rootin’ (¹²) up our taters, and not one on ’em ringled (¹³). Mester, I think we’d better pound ’em.’” (¹⁴)

1 backus	for	wash-house.
2 bor	“	boy.
3 jimmers	“	hinges.
4 glint	“	sight.
5 skrigglin’	“	struggling.
6 shruff	“	old grass & bushes.
7 holl	“	ditch.

8 atwin	for	between.
9 stub-apple	“	crab-apple.
10 touch-wood	“	rotten-wood.
11 pamplin’	“	treading about.
12 rootin’	“	grubbing up.
13 ringled	“	nose-ringed.
14 pound ’em	“	impound them.

self a pattern of temperance. Brown bread was consumed in his house because his great exemplar, Mr Cobbett, declared it to be more wholesome than white bread, and because he learnt from the miller that, in dressing wheat into fine flour, a stone of "offal, or, it may be said, the best portion," is extracted. Thus both health and economy were promoted by the use of brown bread ; and as to drink, "Adam's pure ale," with a little tea, coffee, or cocoa, was his only beverage. John Sillett took for his maxim, as he tells us, the golden rule—"Happy is the man who makes salt his sauce and water his drink." He took to field-work with a beautiful enthusiasm, choosing this passage as the text for his little treatise—"The culture of the ground is thy happiest state, O man! Envy not the possessors of gold, silver, or fine raiment. Their joys may not be so great as thine, for these joys lead unto sloth, and a life of slothfulness is prone to vanity and imaginings of evil." Five years after taking to the land he was able to write—"I am proud to say I am in possession of an abundance of all the good living that any rational man ought to wish for. I have all the bread, meat, vegetables, milk, butter, &c., I can desire. These are to me all the luxuries of life I can crave. All superfluities I regard as so many evils." Such was the spirit in which he carried on his little farm, and he congratulated himself that during five years he had been enabled to support himself, his wife, and two children "in a comfortable, respectable (and I may add, in an independent) manner, and, indeed, a great deal more so than when in business." He seems to have been a clever handicraftsman. At leisure times he put up some farm-buildings with his own hand. They consisted of a wooden framework, roofed with pan-tiles, and enclosed

with walls of clay a foot thick, the clay being collected from the ditches. He also built a cow-house and piggeries, though it will be seen that no expenditure for wood, bricks, or other materials appears in his capital account. He milked the cows, grooming them with a curry-comb and brush, which, as he thinks, adds to their health and condition; he used the curry-comb to his pigs every morning for the same reason, sometimes washing them clean with warm soap-suds and a soft brush. He modified agricultural implements as he thought suitable; constructed a liquid-manure cart such as a man could drag when full; showed great ingenuity in various plans for economising labour, and had his own notion how to do things, the result of reading, and by-and-by of observation. It is quite clear that this is no average peasant. As one of his neighbours said of him, "John Sillett is a rule for nobody;" and it is hardly going too far to say that 99 men out of 100 would have been discouraged and defeated by the difficulties which he overcame. To-day he fills a parochial office, which brings him in a small emolument; a bequest from a relative leaves him in comfortable circumstances; and at the time of my visit a hired labourer was at work in his little freehold. Such is the case of John Sillett, which shows what he found it possible to do, but also shows, I think, that only a man peculiarly gifted and with exceptional advantages could have succeeded in a like position. After a life of unceasing toil, John Sillett well deserves the ease he now enjoys. As far as possible, I have allowed him to tell his own tale, and may conclude this narrative in words of his which, twenty-six years ago, no doubt had considerable influence:—

"Besides the greatest of all benefits which I have

derived in restoring a sickly constitution to perfect health, I feel delighted at the thoughts of being independent of the harassing cares of business. Of all the feelings we possess, none is dearer than the consciousness of independence, and this no man who earns his living by the favour of the public can be said to enjoy in an equal degree with the husbandman. In trade there is a great jealousy and competition existing, and a submission to the public which I always found very galling to my spirit. But since I have given my attention to the cultivation of the soil I find I have no competition to fear. I have nothing to apprehend from the success of my neighbour; and I owe no thanks for the purchase of my commodities. Possessing on my land all the necessities of life, I am under no anxiety regarding my daily subsistence. The motives which have induced me to surmount all difficulties (by the aid of an all-bountiful Providence)—and I have thus far succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations—I trust may have a good effect in stimulating others to follow my humble example. It would be the happiest period of my life to see the many thousands of my fellow-countrymen located on their little estates, now in preparation for them by their noble benefactor and founder of the National Land Company.”

One cannot help fearing that too many of the small cultivators planted on little estates by this “noble benefactor” must have had an experience differing sadly from that of John Sillett.

Between Woodbridge and the sea lie many hundreds of acres of light sandy soil, covered mostly with gorse, with here and there belts of weakly-looking firs. At distant

intervals the land has been broken up ; but the crops answer only too faithfully the description of a Suffolk poet, who must often have looked upon them here in their season, "where the thin harvest waves its withered ears." Here is room for an army of small cultivators, and it is possible to grow corn and roots, though hardly possible to escape ruin in the attempt to grow them. This is the sort of land one hears of in other parts of the county, land dear at nothing an acre, and so light that a high wind will sometimes uproot the turnips or corn, and carry them into the next field. The lanes near such soil have been known to be six feet deep with sand drifted from the neighbouring fields ; and if a gale blows at night, the saying runs that a man never knows exactly where his farm may be when he gets up in the morning. Still, the land has its uses. After the evidence lately given before a Parliamentary Committee upon the value of rabbits for food, we must not despise them, and they are tolerably abundant here ; but the land also gives fair grazing for sheep, and for this reason is called "the Walks." In dry weather it is bare enough, and yields little feed ; but such a wide expanse of pasture is of great value to sheep breeders and feeders for the change and the healthy run which the flocks find there. Happening to pass over "the Walks" two or three times, the occasion seemed a tempting one for a little talk with an intelligent farm-labourer there about peasant proprietorship and cultivation.

"I daresay you've heard tell that there are millions of acres of waste land in England which might be brought under the plough and made to produce food for the people. Here is some of it, I suppose."

Labourer.—"I remember some of the land hereabouts being broke up, but corn-growing here is a poor business. It's wellnigh broke the back of some of the farmers."

"Yes; but could not the labourers do better?"

"Don't think I should like to try."

"Suppose, now, somebody were to say to you, 'I will make you a present of six or seven acres of this heath. Take them for your-own freehold; dig them up and make the best you can of them for a living?'"

"A man could not live on them; it would be starving, not living."

And from this position he could not be moved. Yonder were fields which this year, he said, had hardly been worth the reaping; and instead of being bound to win a precarious subsistence from such thankless soil, he liked better to serve a fair master at fair wages, with 20 or 30 rods of good allotment-ground, which yielded a pretty sure return in any season.

A farmer, who afterwards drove me over the same "Walks," took up his parable as we jogged along, to this effect: "Now, here is what some people call waste land. The British landlord is preached to, and told he ought to let it for corn-growing, and so add to the food of the people instead of leaving it to the rabbits and hares. The British farmer is asked why he doesn't cultivate it or allow small holders to do so. Bless me! how easy it is to talk! As to the landlord, you go and offer him 15s. an acre for a thousand acres of this heath, and see how soon he will snap you up—that is, when he has satisfied himself you are not a knave or a madman. A fool he will be sure you are. The question won't be whether you will come to grief, but how soon you will do so. Now, then, about small holders.

There isn't one of the labourers about here who knows the land and has a head on his shoulders who would say 'thank you' for a dozen acres rent-free if he were bound to break it up and crop it, and live off the produce. Why? Because the men have seen the thing tried, and have seen farmers go to the dogs after trying it. So we farmers are to sacrifice ourselves on the altar of our country, are we? We are to plough up such land as this, and grow cheap food for the people without thinking of profit or loss to ourselves? Aha! much obliged! When I see the British manufacturer go on producing stockings, blankets, and cotton goods, and selling them for less money than they cost him, all out of love for the British people, I'll begin to think about it. Understand, I could grow crops upon this land. In a rainy season I might possibly grow very fair crops. But how about expenses? It is a certainty that every 20s. worth of corn and roots got out of this land would cost you between 25s. and 30s. In saying this I am well within the mark. In a dry year upon a dry soil like this you might think yourself lucky to escape so lightly. High farming! The higher you farm some land the more you lose by it. All the twaddle in the world won't convince me to the contrary. Some land you can hardly spend too much money on, in reason; on other land you might as well throw your money into a well. There is a point at which high farming ceases to pay on any land. It is not a fixed point, and it varies with the nature of the soil. Would you think of making an expensive railway, or any railway at all, through a district which gave no hope of traffic? The farmer must keep his eyes open in the same way for the prospect of a return. He knows that a poor, hungry, unkindly soil is dear at any rent. He

knows that on such land good crops may mean heavy losses, and that if he spends freely he is almost sure to sink more money in the land than will ever come to the surface again in the form of crops. And if he is a man of any acuteness, he looks at the quality of the soil, and considers how much he is likely to get out of it, before making up his mind how much he will put into it. The nonsense talked about breaking up 'waste land' is prodigious. If it pays to cultivate, it is pretty soon broken up. But I doubt whether too much poor land is not under cultivation at this moment. Thousands of acres of poor light lands sown with wheat will not pay this year, though the average wheat crop is a good one. I am no advocate for growing wheat on very light land; and at 20s. a coomb, the crop you get from such land after all this drought means ruin. But now, touching this heath, though it is worth little an acre, it is of great value for the sheep you see scattered over it. In poor dry districts like ours there is usually an excess of sheep over cattle; upon rich soils there is an excess of cattle over sheep. Upon a purely arable farm you cannot keep to advantage a flock of breeding ewes. The soil is too good. Breeding ewes require space, change of ground, and poor feed, or they become gross, and many die in lambing. If, as the agitators wish, this and other heaths or sheep-walks were broken up, and turned, at an enormous outlay, into what would be at the best but indifferent arable land, mutton must be dearer, because fewer sheep could be bred. A poor country, like parts of Wales and parts of Scotland, may maintain more sheep to the acre than the whole of England would; but it would not produce so much corn, nor maintain so many bullocks, nor so many cows. Let us

take the case of three farms with different kinds of soil. On a large farm of light, poor land you will find a large flock of breeding ewes with a few bullocks. On a similar farm of medium mixed soil there will be a large number of grazing sheep—that is, sheep fattening for the butcher—but, as a rule, no breeding ewes; there will also be a larger number of bullocks than on the very light-land farm. On a similar farm of heavy land you will find a large growth of corn, comparatively few grazing sheep, a large number of grazing beasts, with probably a dairy of some importance. On the light-land farm the leading feature will be the flock. On the mixed-soil farm, stock and corn will rank as of about equal importance. On the heavy-land farm, corn will be the staple. The impossibility of furnishing a large supply of meat is one fatal objection to small farms and to peasant farming. A peasant farmer can keep a pig, and sometimes a cow. He cannot breed sheep or cattle, nor can he graze sheep or cattle. In a country of small farms beef and mutton would be dear and of inferior quality, for breeds of cattle and sheep would degenerate. On the other hand, pork and vegetables would be plentiful and cheap; so would poultry and eggs. Corn is so much a cosmopolitan crop nowadays that its price would probably not be affected one way or the other were all England to be parcelled out into peasant farms to-morrow. Whether we wanted a smaller or a larger corn supply from abroad, that supply would come. Thus it is better to do without fresh arable corn-growing land of poor quality, than to lose the heath and so-called ‘waste,’ which carries sheep and puts them in heart again when they go off their feed and want change. In a dry season these walks yield little feed, and 200 or 300 acres do not count

for much by themselves ; but as slices added to the arable farms in the neighbourhood they are very valuable, and flockmasters could hardly do without them. In short, this land would not be profitable for the growth of corn ; but it is profitable, as you see it, for the feed of sheep. Yes, and the rabbits may be thrown in."

A more definite notion of the different produce yielded under a system of small and large farms may be gained by comparing two adjacent parishes. In a preceding chapter a Cambridgeshire parish is mentioned in which, out of 113 farms, all but 20 are under 100 acres. The parish contains 7200 acres, and the average of each holding is therefore about 60 acres. The farmers on these 7200 acres grow a good deal of corn, and send to market a few fat pigs : but, says a farmer, "they supply for consumption next to no sheep or bullocks, nor ever did ;" while an adjacent parish, containing 5700 acres, chiefly held in large farms, sends every year 5000 fat sheep to market, and bullocks in proportion. The production of meat, which must be home bred and fed, is far more valuable to the community than the production of corn, which we can get from abroad. Then, as to cultivation upon large and small holdings, a Suffolk land-agent of great experience gives me this information : "Every practical man knows that the small farms are the worst farmed ; and generally the tenants are at their wits' ends to know how to make both ends meet. I can show you lots of farms of from 500 to 1000 acres in one man's occupation, who will employ one-third more labour than six farmers around him jointly renting the same number of acres, and the large farmer will make nearly double the return. In my business I repeatedly meet with pitiable cases of failure by small farmers. Let me give you one

practical instance. In 1870 I was instructed to report the value of a small farm of sixty acres for the purpose of mortgage. My valuation came to £1600, and £1200 was advanced upon it. Last week the solicitor who lent the money came to me and said the man wanted a further advance of £250. I was therefore requested to inspect the property and advise upon the sufficiency of the security. I did so, and found the property deteriorated instead of improved in value. So I said to the farmer, 'How much have you received over £1 a-week from your farm for the last three years?' 'Nothing,' was the reply. 'If I had made £1 a-week your visit here to-day would have been unnecessary.'

The struggles of such men to keep up their social position and not sink back into the grade of labourers are quite as painful in their way as the privations of underpaid peasants. Indeed, a steady labourer in regular work at fair wages is far better off, and really enjoys the independence which the care-worn, anxious farmer with few acres and small means only possesses in name. "Farming is an agreeable occupation," said an experienced farmer and landowner, "but it is a poor business at the best—a business in which, on the whole, more money is made by pinching and screwing than by liberal management." But the small farmer who depends solely on his few acres for a living, pinches and screws without making money. If he employs labourers, he cannot always keep them going, or afford to pay them such wages as entitle him to expect from them good or remunerative service; and as the rental of small holdings is generally higher than that of large farms, he is at a disadvantage both ways. What he gives without stint is his own labour; but it is too often self-denial and labour in vain. The same story is told pretty nearly everywhere.

The result is, that small farms are being gradually consolidated, or annexed to larger holdings, while the farmhouses are converted into cottages. There is room for such a process. According to the agricultural returns of 1873, the average extent of land under crops, fallow, and grass in each holding—that is, each separate occupation—is 56 acres in England and Scotland, and 26 in Ireland. This is exclusive of land let in allotments. The extent of each holding in the Eastern Counties is somewhat higher than the general average for England. In Cambridge it is 59 acres, in Essex 82, in Huntingdon 69, in Lincoln 55, in Norfolk 56, in Suffolk 72. According to the Census of 1871, the average size of a farm in seventeen representative counties, including Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincoln, was 152 acres. This acreage, no doubt, includes heathland; and it must be remembered that some farms cover, perhaps, two or three separate holdings. Two facts appear clearly on the face of the interesting table given in the Census under this head. One is, that the number of small farms is much greater than is generally supposed; the other is, that the number is steadily dwindling. Out of 59,870 farmers in the seventeen representative counties who returned their acreage, 12,075, or more than a fifth, cultivated less than 20 acres. But in 1851 there were 12,941 farmers of this class. Again, in 1851, 8253 farmers held farms containing 50 and less than 75 acres; in 1871 there were only 6370 farmers of this class. The farms under 100 acres in 1871 were 33,162, more than half the total number returned; but in 1851 there were 39,139 farms of this size. The turning-point seems to be at farms of 200 acres. When you pass this limit you find the number of farms in the later period begin to increase instead of diminishing. Thus

the number of farms of 300 acres and upwards was 7771 in 1851, and 8410 in 1871; those containing 500 acres and upwards numbered 2755 in 1851, and 3194 in 1871; the farms of 1000 acres and upwards were 492 in 1851, and 582 in 1871; and in the latter year there were 90 farms of 2000 acres and upwards, against 64 farms of the same size in 1851. The figures show that a surprisingly large proportion of small farms still remains; and it is well that some should remain, for they may sometimes be cultivated to advantage by men who follow other occupations and are not entirely dependent upon farming, while they afford the means of rising in the world to farm bailiffs or labourers of exceptional enterprise and intelligence. Such openings are never likely to be wholly wanting in England, but I fear they must become rarer every year; and the tendency of things is towards leaving little chance for the farmer without capital except in the colonies. It seems a hard necessity, but economic laws are inexorably hard.*

* According to the returns of the Board of Trade for 1873, there were then 246,000 garden allotments detached from houses of agricultural labourers—viz., 242,000 in England, 1700 in Wales, and only 2100 in Scotland. These 246,000 allotments represented 59,631 acres, showing an almost exact average of a quarter of an acre for each allotment. In 24 counties in which there were altogether 122,000 allotments, the size varied usually from one-eighth to one-fourth of an acre. In 18 counties, containing 120,000 allotments, the size varied from one-fourth to one-half of an acre. Adding to the number of allotments in England in 1873, 111,000 holdings (distinguished from allotments) between one-fourth of an acre and five acres, we have 353,000 occupations of land not exceeding 5 acres in extent, exclusive of gardens attached to all classes of dwelling-houses, and generally exclusive of the potato patches or gardens attached to labourers' cottages. Considerable as is the number of allotments, relatively, to the number of agricultural labourers, one cannot but hope that the allotment system, so wholesome in its influence upon the labourer, and so welcome an addition to his small means, may extend still further.

CHAPTER XIII.

FARMING IN EAST ANGLIA—PIECE-WORK—THE KNETTISHALL FARM
 —PLOUGHING—ARBITRATION AS TO PIECE-WORK, DIFFICULTIES OF
 —HAYSEL—HOEING—THE GANG SYSTEM—THE TURNIP CROP—
 OVERTIME—EXTRA WORK—SOMETIMES DISTASTEFUL—HARVESTING
 —HARVEST AGREEMENT—A COMMONWEALTH OF LABOUR—"LORD
 OF THE HARVEST"—EMULATION IN WORK—HORSES—BEER-DRINK-
 ING—CONSUMPTION DURING HARVEST—SHEEP-SHEARING—A CLOSE
 COMPANIONSHIP—EARNINGS SHARED UNEQUALLY—SYSTEM OF
 WAGE-PAYING—DRILLING—VIPERS AND RATS—OTHER PIECE-WORK
 —LIBERAL SCALE OF PAYMENTS NECESSARY—SPECIAL CONTRACTS
 —WAGES IN NORFOLK ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO—OLD LABOUR
 DIFFICULTIES—PIECE-WORK COMMON—COST OF—OLD NORFOLK
 CUSTOMS.

PIECE-WORK in farming is so great a protection to the farmer, who then pays only for work actually done, and affords such encouragement to the labourer, who then has the strongest inducement to exertion, that some further description of the working of this system on the Knettishall farm will be of interest.* We may begin with ploughing. This is paid for at the rate of 1s. 4d. an acre. Knettishall is a light-land farm, and with a double plough two acres are generally got through in a day without hurting either men or horses. On heavy land a different rate of pay would be necessary, and there the farmer must take care that in ploughing by piece-work the strength of the horses is

* *Ante*, p. 109.

not overtaxed. Upon a heavy-land farm a man might not be able to do more than half an acre a-day, and this day's work might try the horses more than two acres upon light soil. Another scale would be necessary upon mixed-soil farms, and upon the same farm difference of soil might require two different scales of remuneration. But there would be no greater difficulty in providing for these cases than has been experienced here, where for two years past the system has been found a fair one both to master and men. An obvious objection to it is, that the work may be hard or easy according to the season, and that a price which is just at one time may be inadequate or excessive at another. Mr Mathew gets over the difficulty by putting out the ploughing at a fixed average price, taking one season with another. After some experience, and with a little giving and taking on both sides, such an adjustment of pay is not hard to make. The delegates of the National Union at Leamington rejected arbitration about piece-work. The conditions of such work are, indeed, so various and so complicated, that no general rule holds, and arbitrators would not only have to take into account each farm, but frequently each field. On either side of a hedge the soil may be such as to require different pay for the men employed in ploughing it; and acreage rates, therefore, are much better left to masters and men themselves. Here it is found that, with 1s. 4d. an acre all round, the men earn an average of about 4d. a-day above the rate of daily wages, which in this district are 2s. 4d.—14s. a-week. The practice is for the men when on piece-work to draw from week to week on this scale, an account of their earnings being kept meanwhile. If they want a little money on account they can have it, and then at the end of two

or three months a balance is struck, and they receive whatever surplus is found due to them. Mowing is paid for at the rate of 10d. an acre, the farmer of course finding machines and horses. After the mowing is ended, day-work begins till the hay is fit for carrying. Piece-work is hardly possible then on account of the weather, for in fickle weather the work must sometimes be done over and over again. Pitching and loading is all done by the piece. Sixpence is paid for a two-horse waggon-load, which would be nearly equal in the loose state to a ton of hay in the truss. A good day's work would be thirty-two loads, and this would be the work of four men, two to pitch and two to load. At 6d. a load these four men would earn 16s., or 4s. a-day apiece, and they are allowed two pints of beer. Unloading on to the stack is done by four men in the same way, and is paid for at the same rate, the farmer finding a stacker to stack the hay. Of the four men, one would be on the waggon and three on the stack. Hoeing is also done by the piece, but on a different principle. The custom hereabouts—and it seems to be a growing custom—is to let the work to a gang-master. The whole of the hoeing at Knettishall, upon 127 acres of wheat, has been taken in this way, at 2s. 10d. an acre. A large proportion of land in Norfolk is also hoed by contract; and the same system prevails with regard to some other farm-work, such as “mucking,” and getting up beet and swedes.

Hitherto in Suffolk—and Knettishall is in that county, though on the Norfolk border—the gang system has not made much way, but it will probably be further developed by the Unions, for it enables farmers to dispense with some regular hands. There were about twenty men and boys in the gang employed here, and the men earn about 2d. a-day

more than if they were working as ordinary farm hands. As to the farmer, the work is more cheaply done, and on the whole is better done. The rate of pay among the men employed depends on the stroke they can keep up ; and they are sharply looked after to prevent idling or scamped work. Somehow the farmer cannot get the same "stroke," or rapid work, out of his own men, even when the hoeing is being done on piece. The gang-master makes money. He finds a horse and van to take the people to and from their work, and can provide employment for them pretty nearly all the year round. What with this certainty of employment and high wages, he has never any trouble in getting men, and good men ; and there is constant emulation among the younger ones to work quickly and well, because each says, "If I can only keep up in my 'stroke' with the leading man, I shall earn more money." The leading man is chosen for his quickness, and maybe gets a trifle extra for setting a quick stroke and keeping it up. To every gang there is a foreman, and the supervision is chiefly in quality of work ; for as to quickness of work, the men are so much *en evidence* that they do not like to fall behind and get a character for being slower than their fellows. Indeed they would very soon be turned out of the gang if the gang-master or his sharp foreman saw that they were reducing the profits of the contract, and were not giving money's worth. Lads take to hoeing with a view to join the gang almost as soon as they are big enough to handle a hoe, and in time become as expert as people who confine themselves to one fixed and narrow groove of labour generally are.

Sainfoin, a favourite crop at Knettishall, used to cost for mowing 5s. an acre, yielding about 3 tons an acre. It now

costs for mowing with the machine 10d. an acre. This is one economy effected by machinery, which has helped the farmer in the hay-harvest more, perhaps, than in any other kind of labour. Here the hay is now put on the stack at the same price per ton as it used to cost for mowing. The regular wheat-hoeing, as I have said, is intrusted to gangs. What other hoeing remains is left for odd jobs, and is either done as day-work or with the horse-hoe at 3d. an acre. The turnip-hoeing, which lasts till about the time harvest ends, is done here chiefly by old men who are not equal to harvest-work. For swedes and white turnips the rate is 7s. 6d. an acre. Beet costs 8s. As to beet, if, through want of labour, a farmer loses the opportunity of planting it out at the proper season, he cannot resume the work at any time. Swedes do not require the same amount of labour; white turnips need less still; cole-seed next to none. But beet-root will carry one-third more stock than swedes, and swedes one-third more than white turnips, which, again, will carry twice as much as cole-seed. It cannot be too often repeated, that a short supply of labour, whether from strikes, lock-outs, or other causes, means crops which will produce nothing like the usual quantity of fat stock. Thus, what generally happens in other labour disputes happens here—the innocent public suffer, and poor consumers rather than rich, because the production of meat is checked. One reason why the lock-out did not extend into Norfolk may be because in that county the success of the farm depends mainly upon the root crop, for which labour is indispensable—at all events, from the beginning of April till the end of July. Suffolk farming is less dependent upon roots.

Returning to the piece-work plan, "mucking" is paid for at per score loads. Filling muck into tumbrils (Suffolk for heavy carts) and spreading on the land costs 6s. a score loads, a tumbril holding about 40 bushels. The 6s. is thus divided—for filling, 2s. 6d.; spreading, 2s. 6d.; the boy who leads receiving 1s. At this work a man may earn 2s. 6d. a-day. Fencing and ditching are paid for by the rod. Dressing corn is paid for by the 20 coombs, and costs 1s. a score for each time of passing through the dressing-machine. Thrashing is done by the farmer's machine, and is not paid for by the piece. The men who drive the engine and attend to the drum receive 1s. a-day extra; the man who attends to the sacking of the corn, 6d. a-day extra. All the other men who have anything to do with the engine-work get 2d. a-day extra. There is a pint of beer each all round—an encouragement to them to get through the work as fast as possible. Sowing artificial manure is paid at the rate of 3d. a-day extra upon the nominal wages of 14s. weekly. Then there is a capital plan here of paying for overtime. The regular hours are from 6 to 6, with half-an-hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner. With a payment of 3d. an hour for overtime, the employer is free from the necessity of begging and praying the men to stop and bribing them with beer. He is able to command them when their services are wanted, and the men are ready enough to add a little to their earnings in this way, and cease to feel that they are "doing a lot for nothing." The plan is worth imitation, if only for the payment in money instead of beer; and while the extra hours do not cost much, they save much unpleasant feeling, expressed or suppressed. But no plan will make extra or even ordinary work agreeable to some men, and it is not always a ques-

tion even of money. "There are men of all sorts," as the philosophic Knettishall bailiff observed. "One chap will say, 'I'm not a-going to hurt myself with work. Let me work by the day, please!' Other chaps don't mind extra work if they can lay hold of a little more money. Men differ as much in their work as they do in their height." The bailiff's overcharge of land and of men comprises the whole parish, but his reflection is certainly extra-parochial.

Harvesting upon the Knettishall farm may supply another not uninteresting chapter of rural economy. We may start, first, with a homely agreement entered into between the farmer and the 24 men and boys who got in the corn. The almost universal system elsewhere is to treat separately with each man, who receives so much money for harvest, irrespective of the time occupied over it. At Knettishall the contract entered into is not between the farmer and each individual labourer, but between the farmer and the whole body of labourers employed, to whom a stipulated sum is paid, and is divided by the men themselves. Under this system the malt and hops are found by the men, and do not form part of the wages paid in kind. Here is the agreement:—

"Agreed, for the sum of £170, with the men whose names are herein written, to do all the harvesting of the corn in a proper and husbandlike manner, to include the thatching of the same, and also the seeing after the horses, cows, and pigs, littering the yards when necessary, carting straw for thatching, and any other work incidental to the securing the corn and attending to the stock. There being 32 acres of corn more than last year, it is further agreed that a sum per acre equal to the payment of £170 for the

same quantity of acres as was done last year shall be paid in excess of the above sum of £170."

Then follow the names. It is not quite such an agreement as a conveyancer would draw; but it is simple, and answers its purpose in binding both parties to it, and in being understood by both. The acreage of corn covered by this agreement was—wheat, 114; barley, 138; oats, 38; rye, 32. Of peas, 34 acres were cut by hand before the corn harvest, and cost 7s. 6d. an acre, which included cutting, carting, stacking, and thatching. Twenty acres of sainfoin and ten acres of clover were cut with the machine, and cost 4s. an acre. The corn harvest worked out at about 12s. an acre, including everything. The men had no difficulty in making an equitable division of the lump sum given to them. An adult labourer, whose nominal weekly earnings during the year are 14s., ranks as an able-bodied man and takes a full share. Then there are three-quarter men, half-men, and boys, who share according to their respective capacities for work. Upon this principle of division an adult labourer's earnings at harvest were £8, 19s. Not long ago a man used to have £5, 10s. for harvesting, with two bushels of malt, the farmer paying the boys. At Knettishall the boys cast in their lot with the rest, and it is the interest of the men to look sharp, not only after the boys, but after each other. In this commonwealth of labour loitering is against the common good. It is, in fact, the gang system applied to harvest-work, except that the men are for the most part in the farmer's own employment instead of being strangers. Another essential difference is that there is no gang-master, whose business it is to get as much work as possible out of the men, and thereby to make as much profit as possible for himself.

The place of the gang-master is taken by "the lord of the harvest"—a personage already mentioned, though not now so important or prominent as he used to be in days when machines were not and men were all in all. Then the farmer's hopes of good work depended upon his having in the harvest-field a leading man who set "a good stroke," which other labourers there must maintain if they desired to keep their status and pay as "full" men. At Knettishall there is one man who has been "lord of the harvest" for forty-eight years. These men get nothing extra for the responsible position they fill. The honour of being leading man, looked up to by the farmer and fellow-labourer, seems to be all and enough. Naturally, the example of such a man has considerable influence. If he drinks more than he should drink, other men do so. If he dawdles over his work, or, on the other hand, if he works steadily and swiftly, the men are equally ruled by his example. He should be a temperate man, with a strong back, a strong will, and a pride in his strength. Emulation, which does so much in higher spheres of labour, is, indeed, an appreciable force even in a harvest-field, especially where, as at Knettishall, the men are working upon the co-operative system, and will share the whole fruit of their toil, with no middleman to intercept profits if they work harder than usual. Both under the system just described and according to the ordinary practice of paying each man separately for harvest, it is the labourers' interest to finish quickly. But the farmers often find it necessary to stimulate the men to quicker work by other inducements, which generally take the form of beer. The harvest is now a trying time for horses. The men used to do the hard work. Now it is done by the machines, but the motive power is

furnished by the horses, which at harvest-time, of course, are not spared. Formerly the horses did not get much corn, but they now eat it all the year round. The farmer has found with the quadruped, as he will find with the biped, that better feeding insures better work. In wet weather, it should be added, the corn is still cut by hand as well as with the machine. But the farmers in 1874 had splendid weather for the ingathering of their crops, the bulk of which in the Eastern Counties was secured in fine condition.

I have said elsewhere that the men drink more beer than is good for them, though habitual drunkenness is, I think, rarer in the Eastern Counties than in other parts of England, and drunkenness less usually makes a man savage and actively brutal. For one reason, the beer is generally home-brewed and thin, so that a man can drink a good deal before it affects his head; and it has no "maddening" properties, like too much of that sold for malt-liquor in less favoured regions. My readers, however, must not suppose from the prevalence of home-brewed ale that ale-houses are unknown or unfrequented in Suffolk villages. The tap-room is a recognised institution there as elsewhere; and a gentleman who can ascertain pretty exactly the quantity sold at the public-houses and beer-houses in his village supplied me with an elaborate estimate that, setting down this consumption to the debit of the adult males, the bread-winners of families, they must spend an average of over £10 a-year apiece in liquor and tobacco, besides the beer brewed at home. As I have no means of checking this calculation, it must go for what it is worth, but it is given me by a gentleman who would be likely to underestimate rather than exaggerate. The drink consumed in

the harvest-field is more easily reckoned. At Knettishall the men supply themselves with malt and hops ; and therefore, if any choose to avoid stimulants, they may do so without suffering for their temperance. They usually buy two bushels of malt, from which they make 18 gallons of best beer and about 22 gallons of small beer—40 gallons altogether. In a harvest of five weeks there would be thirty working days, and I find an average consumption of a gallon a-day reckoned a low one. Upon expressing astonishment that even the *dura ilia messorum* should be proof against four or five quarts of malt-liquor, absorbed day after day, I was told that this quantity would be thought a mere bagatelle by the sheep-shearers, who, after drinking two gallons a-day apiece, are still thirsty and call for more.

An East Suffolk farmer gives me a definite statement which points even to a larger consumption in the harvest-field. "We always allow our men," he says, "three bushels of best malt for harvest. Out of each bushel they make from nine to ten 'pails' of three gallons." A pail is the Suffolk measurement in home-brewing. "They have, therefore, from 27 to 30 pails, or from 81 to 90 gallons, as the case may be, for the harvest, which in average years lasts 27 days. Besides this quantity of beer, a 300-acre farmer never thinks of giving away less than 36 gallons, or a barrel, of what we in Suffolk call harvest-beer, which is specially strong, and is generally brewed during the previous March. This is exactly what goes on year after year in this district as regards beer allowance. I have often seen men come with empty bottles during the last few days of harvest and get their fellow-labourers to give them some, and I always give them some myself if I know they are without." Even allowing liberal draughts out of all this

malt-liquor for the women and boys, the quantity which would remain for each adult labourer is enough to have astonished even Gargantua. Some farmers, as I know, are, or were till recently, in the habit of sending into the field a stone bottle filled with whisky-and-water, which was served out to the men when the weather was very hot or any special effort was called for. The whole system seems a bad one, calculated to encourage excessive drinking. Very few labourers will admit that they could work at harvest-time without stimulants; but I have found some reasonable men confess that, at the end of the week, so much beer tells upon them, literally damping their energies, and hindering quick work instead of promoting it. Still, one can trace improvement in the habits of the people in this respect. There used to be an abominable practice of "wetting" the harvest bargain. The men used to cut a sheaf or two and then fall to upon beer. Sometimes on the first day the whole of the men employed would not cut more than half an acre, and they drank in the field to such excess that they would sometimes pass the whole night there, being too drunk to get home. The second day of harvest was almost as bad, and three or four days would pass before the labourers got into the steady swing of work. Whatever other crosses he may have to endure, the farmer's nerves are, at all events, not now tried by these drinking-bouts and irritating delays at the most critical period throughout the year.

Sheep-clipping is another part of the piece-work system at Knettishall, and the same system is common to most of the farmers in this district. There are gangs of clippers who travel about the country at shearing-time, and are noted for their expertness, and also, as already appears,

for their drinking powers. The farmer allowed them, nominally, a quart of beer for every score of sheep ; and as there were 36 score, they were entitled to 36 quarts. In fact they received ten gallons. But this allowance by no means met the wants of such thirsty souls, and they ordered nearly 15 more gallons from the nearest public-house, of course paying for it themselves. Sheep-shearers, however, seem to have shared in the gradual improvement of their class. Though a good deal of room for improvement is left still, 25 gallons drunk in a single day by 21 workmen are a much smaller quantity than used to be consumed by the sheep-shearers when the beer was supplied without limit by the farmers for whom they worked. "In my father's time, 30 years ago," said the farmer, "nearly double the quantity would have been drunk." The work, it is true, is hard, and the clippers put forth all their strength in getting through it rapidly, immediately moving off to the next job. The contract with them is to clip the ewes at 3s. 6d. a score, hoggets at 4s. The winding up of each fleece before it is packed away costs about 10s. upon 36 score of sheep, and the whole work would be cleared off in a day by the gang. I believe it is not easy to join this companionship. An entrance-fee is demanded from new comers, and the leading man of the gang is particular in admitting only strong, healthy recruits. A vacancy rarely arises except through death or old age, for the employment is lucrative, and congenial to men not afraid of hard work and liking the excitement of moving about from parish to parish. As to lodging, the clippers sleep in a barn, under a stack, "or anywhere," while they go about the country. They make nearly 10s. a-day apiece—at least the best hands do, for in this republic of workers all

men are not equal. A man must approve himself by quick and good shearing before he can expect a full share of the money earned, and at first he will probably only receive a quarter of the sum shared by the others. Here, again, it is the interest of all to work with a will. A laggard is soon detected, and no politeness is wasted in telling him so. Really good clipping is a difficult handicraft, and the immense experience of these gangs makes them much sought after by the farmers. They mostly come out of Norfolk—Soham, near Swaffham, being rather famed for them. They are generally engaged at Harling and some other spring fairs, and the days appointed by the various farmers are ticked off on the almanac. A shilling of earnest-money binds the bargain. The farmers used to board them, but now the men board themselves. Under the boarding system they used to show themselves as good at the trencher as at the barrel. Sometimes, after the job was done, they would sit and joke and sing till midnight, and then move off during the night, walking six, ten, or it might be twenty miles, to fulfil their next contract; and so on night after night during the shearing season, snatching an hour or two of sleep at odd times. It is still trying work, and while it lasts the men hardly ever take their clothes off. But the frolics and excesses of old times are now much curtailed.

I have already shown the system adopted at Knettishall in putting out the hay-cutting, ploughing, hoeing, and other farm-work by the acre, instead of paying stated weekly wages. The men draw their nominal wages of 14s. (horsemen 15s.) until the particular job is completed, and then there is a settling, founded upon the measurement and calculation of work done. For drilling wheat, 6d. an acre is paid. In drilling soft corn—barley, oats, peas—the land

can be got over somewhat more quickly, and the price is 5d. an acre. The men can drill 10 acres of wheat and $10\frac{1}{2}$ or 11 of soft corn daily. If the average work is 10 acres of wheat, the men will earn 1s. a-day above the rate of day-wages, or rather more than 1s. Something, of course, depends on the horses as well as on the men. Eleven acres and a half have been done in a day. I am assured it is not very hard work; but to make up such a daily average there must be "no stopping at the ends;" you must "keep going on." Here is an account of $23\frac{1}{2}$ days' work in drilling: Soft corn, 210 acres (some on mixed, some on light soil), at 5d. per acre, £4, 7s. 6d.; seeds, 14 acres, 5s. 10d.; sainfoin, 21 acres, at 3d. (a long, wide drill is used, covering a good deal of ground), 5s. 3d., —total, £4, 18s. 7d.; deduct money paid on account, £2, 9s.; balance earned in excess of nominal weekly wages, £2, 9s. 7d., divided between the man who leads the horses and the man behind who holds the drill. These extra earnings are a great encouragement to both men; and the money thus made in drilling is said to be equivalent to an extra shilling a-week upon wages all the year round. The total acreage covered in these $23\frac{1}{2}$ days' work was 245 acres, which gives a daily average of very nearly $10\frac{1}{2}$ acres. There are plenty of farms on which no more than six acres a-day are got through. A difference in the width of the drill may account in some measure for the smaller acreage covered; but probably a cause which has greater influence is the different mode of payment, and the stimulus which piece-work gives. Both the men engaged in the drilling at Knettishall were horse-keepers, receiving 15s. a-week, 1s. above the ordinary wages; and they paid no rent for their cottages, which

have two rooms down-stairs and three bedrooms. The shepherds also live rent-free. All the new cottages built by Mr Thornhill in the parishes of Riddlesworth, Knettishall, and Gasthorpe, have five rooms. The rent is £3, 3s. For the older cottages £2 is paid, including the garden, and 5s. for an allotment of 20 or 30 rods.

Vipers and rats seem an unlikely source of income, but they add a trifle to the wages at Knettishall, and I daresay at most other farms where these vermin abound. Rats are worth a penny each to the man who can kill them; vipers twopence. It costs the farmer £8 or £10 a-year to keep down the rats at Knettishall. An unusual quantity of vipers made their appearance in the hot, dry season of 1874, and a boy caught eight in one day. They are not pleasant visitors, for they bite the sheep; and at the time of my visit two sheep had already been killed by them. No doubt, the sheep feed up to them, sometimes perhaps stamp upon them, and the vipers nearly always bite in the face or throat. Among other small earnings may be mentioned that of the thatcher, who receives 1s. per corn-stack, besides his harvest-wages, and 8d. a-day extra for thatching hay. Trussing stover (hay made from artificial grass) is paid for at the rate of 20d. per ton. In the autumn, "topping and filling" the beet-root—that is, wringing off or cutting off the tops, and filling the tumbrils (carts)—costs 8s. an acre; and the same price is paid for "hilling up" the swedes in readiness for cutting when the hoggets and sheep are turned upon the land. I have before stated that overtime, instead of being coaxed out of the men by beer, is paid for at the rate of 3d. an hour. If any necessary work falls to be done on Sundays, it is also paid for as an extra. The stockman, besides 16s. a-week, gets a penny

a score for all the eggs he collects. His wife attends to the poultry, and makes £3 or £4 in the course of the year. The sheep-washing is done by Mr Mathew's own men. The four who stand at the tubs and wash receive 3s. a-day and their board; and the shepherd has 35s. with which to buy meat and beer.

These details will give some notion of the varied work upon a farm, and of the possibility of adapting the piece or task system to a good deal of farm-work. The result of such a system is encouraging to the men; and not only not injurious, but a source of profit to the farmer, because he gets more for his money. But the farmer, if he wishes to be well served under this system, must lay down a scale of payments in no grudging spirit, remembering the wise saying of old, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth." If a man finds that by "working his heart out," as the phrase runs here, he can only earn a few pence more than by lounging through the day, he will reckon naturally enough that it is not worth while to task his strength and energies for so small a gain. No doubt, also, there are men constitutionally indolent, self-indulgent, and careless of the future, who will never do a stroke more work than they can help doing. For instance, a farmer who writes to me about piece-work says, "I cannot understand the labourers unless I look on them as children—impetuous, wilful, untrained. They will strike and go through all sorts of privations under the evil direction of demagogues for the sake of getting a shilling a-week more of nominal wages. Yet these very men, working on my farm at day's wages, finish their 'score' or 'stint' by one o'clock day after day. I say to them, 'Why not work three or four hours longer, as you very well can, and earn half as much again—say

3s. 6d., instead of 2s. to 2s. 6d. a-day?' They reply, 'No, master, we don't want no more money. We've arned as much as we care about! We'd ruther go home and smoke a pipe!'" Such indifference is common to races of a lower type in countries where the means of living are easier than they are with us. The negro will hoe or dig in the cane-piece up to noon, and, having earned his shilling, no persuasion or hope of earning another shilling will induce him to begin again. But I cannot think such cases common in England, where the struggle to live is so keen, and opportunities of earning money with comparative ease are so seldom within the peasant's reach. At all events, plenty of English peasants are ready to jump at the chance of earning more money by piece-work; and it is a system so just to the labourer, and apparently so beneficial to the farmer where it has been fairly tried, that one hopes it may become much more general.*

Besides the general tariff for various descriptions of piece-work established by Mr Mathew, special arrangements are made from time to time for special work, and the terms are generally committed to writing. I have already given a contract entered into for harvest-work. Here are two more. The first is an agreement made with four men "to do the work upon the field called Forty-two Acres, to be planted with beet-root or turnips as follows: To fill and spread the muck-hill now standing upon the field for the sum of £3, 5s.; and, when the plant is ready, to hoe the same three times if necessary for the sum of 8s.

* "The chief objections to piece-work," says a farmer, "are that it leads to 'scamping,' and that it necessitates eternal higgling with the men about prices. If *you can depend upon your men*, day-work is better."

per acre, and to do the work in a proper and workmanlike manner." The farmer, on his side, undertakes "to do the horse-hoeing, or pay for the same being done well, as many times as the field is hoed by hands." The second agreement is a hiring of a labourer who is "to look after four horses" and do the farm-work, "being paid as under: When by the day, at the usual wage paid to other able-bodied men upon the farm; to do the ploughing at 1s. 4d. an acre; scarifying and crab-harrowing (4 horses), 3½d. per acre; harrowing (light and heavy), 3s. per score acres; subsoiling ridges with grubber, 5s. per acre; Cambridge rolling, 3d. per acre; heavy iron rolling, 3d. per acre; splitting down ridges with single plough, 1s. 6d. per acre. The said C. D. to occupy a cottage and give up possession thereof when he ceases to work for the said W. M., and to have 1s. per week for overtime and Sunday attendance upon horses and stable-work. During harvest, to have the same money as other men upon the farm." No time of service is fixed in the agreement, but a tolerably good guarantee for the length of it is afforded by the provision for surrender of the cottage when the labourer ceases to work on the farm. Substantially, though not in terms, this is a yearly hiring. I do not know why farmers should not protect themselves more frequently against sudden strikes by such hirings, and then it would matter little to them whether their men belonged or did not belong to a Union.

A few notes about wages in Norfolk, past and present, may be of interest. The harvest-wages in Norfolk vary from £7 to £8, the harvest lasting about three weeks—less time by a week than it usually occupies in most parts of Suffolk. It has already been stated that, with day-

wages fixed at 15s. weekly, a large number of the labourers in this county now earn, with piece-work and harvest-money, an average of £1 a-week all the year round. This estimate contrasts curiously with a statement of wages paid to husbandmen here about a hundred years ago, taken from some notes upon agriculture in Norfolk by Mr Marshall, who, in 1780, was agent to Sir Harbord Harbord (afterwards Lord Suffield). Yearly servants were then paid as follows: A head-man, £8 to £10; a second man, £4 to £6; a harrow-boy, 40s.; a woman, £3 to £3, 3s.; a girl, 30s. to 40s. Day-labourers were paid at the following rates: A common man, in winter, 1s. a-day and beer; in summer, 1s. 1d. and beer; a "teamer man" was allowed 1s. a-week extra for horse-money, and his "road allowance" was 6d. a day's journey. The harvest-wages were 35s. to 40s. and board, whether the harvest was short or long. A woman's day-wage was 6d. and beer, and in harvest also board. The farmers complained greatly of this system of boarding the harvest-hands; and one backward and rainy season is mentioned by Mr Marshall in which the harvest-people were boarded seven weeks, during two or three of which they were idle. He gives a good report of their alacrity in working. "From four in the morning until dark, their meal-times excepted, the harvest-men work, not as for their masters, but as for themselves." These long hours are certainly not now given up to harvest-work, and machinery has made the labour far lighter than it was then. "Any old woman could do harvest-work nowadays," said a farmer the other day. "There is the pitching, to be sure; but as for tying up after the reaper, it can hardly be called work at all when compared with the old toil and moil of harvest. I have seen a woman

get through just as much as my men, taking the lead and keeping it all through the day as 'lord' of the harvest." Even, however, in the good old days of which I am speaking, Norfolk farmers were not without their little troubles in dealing with their men. They complained that work was done during harvest-time in a loose and slovenly manner, though they were willing to admit that this might be due to unusual quickness. "A man who reaps, for instance, from half to three-quarters of an acre a-day, cannot be expected to do his work so neatly, to lay his corn so straight, and bind his sheaves so tightly, as he who only reaps one-third of an acre." Another very reprehensible practice at harvest-time is noticed—that if the weather were such as not to afford the harvest-hands full employment, they used to think themselves, by ancient custom, entitled to refuse to do every other kind of work. "I am sorry," says Mr Marshall, "that truth obliges me to relate it, but it is no unusual thing for parties of them to be playing at cards in a barn while the turnip crop is receiving irreparable injury for want of their assistance—a crime of which both master and men ought to be equally ashamed."

Ploughing, "whether it be breaking up a fallow or stirring it," was paid for in Norfolk a hundred years since at the rate of 2s. 6d. an acre, though Mr Marshall says that in many other parts of the kingdom 10s. an acre was the current price—a difference which leads him to advocate elsewhere the adoption of the Norfolk system of ploughing with two horses and going two journeys a-day. It is curious to see how much other work on the farm used then to be done by piece in the county. Thus, filling marl cost 2d. a load; spreading marl, 9d. to 1s. an acre; "out-holling"—*i. e.*, scouring out the rich mould from the bot-

tom of ditches—1d. to 2d. per rod of seven yards ; turning up muck in the yard was paid for by the lump ; turning muck-heaps, 1d. a load ; filling muck, 1d. a load ; spreading it, 8d. to 10d. an acre. Wheat was generally sown by the day ; but barley, turnip-seed, and clover or artificial grasses cost 2d. an acre. For the first hoeing of turnips the men were paid 3s. 6d. to 4s. an acre ; second hoeing, 2s. to 2s. 6d. an acre, with beer. This price of 6s. an acre for the two hoeings was reckoned low when compared with the price paid in other counties, where the same work cost 8s., 10s., or 12s. an acre. Two reasons are given for the disparity : first, because “in Norfolk a boy by the time he is the height of a hoe begins to make use of one ; consequently every countryman is a turnip-hoer, and is generally expert compared with those of other places, where hoeing turnips is a mystery known only to gardeners.” The other reason assigned is the friability of the Norfolk soil, and its freeness from stones. Weeding a hundred years ago cost from 6d. to 5s. an acre ; stone-picking, 2d. an acre ; mowing clover and artificial grass, 1s. to 1s. 6d. an acre, with beer ; mowing grass, 1s. 6d. to 1s. 9d. an acre, and beer. Reaping wheat was paid for at the rate of 5s. to 6s. or 7s. an acre ; mowing barley, &c., 1s. an acre. Thatchers received 8d. a square for ricks, or, more commonly, 6d. a yard in length for both sides, whether the roof were deep or shallow. The same system of remuneration prevailed with regard to barn-labour. For wheat-thrashing the farmer paid 1s. a coomb, and beer ; for thrashing barley, oats, and buckwheat, 6d. to 8d. a coomb, and beer ; for thrashing peas, 9d. a coomb, and the same universal solvent—so that, for beer allowances, like many other bad systems, the plea of ancient usage may be urged.

Thrashing clover-seed cost 6s. a bushel ; sifting cleaned corn, 1d. a coomb ; screening and putting up such corn, 6d. a last ; cutting chaff, 1s. 6d. to 1s. 8d. a score, or 1s. 6d. a-day and board. Passing to another class of work, I find that cutting open drains in "moory" meadows 3 feet wide cost 2d. to 4d. a rod (of seven yards), and beer ; and scouring such drains annually, a halfpenny a rod.

The general system of piece-work which was thus used in 1780 in Norfolk seems to have been in a great measure discarded ; but events are now showing the policy of reviving and extending it. The system of boarding unmarried agricultural labourers in the farmhouse is, notwithstanding the late Mr William Cobbett's regrets over its disuse, not a custom likely to be revived. It is as much out of date as the like system of boarding journeymen and apprentices in the towns, and for the same reason. Another old custom used to prevail in Norfolk at the time of which I speak. Most of the farmers in those days are said to have been able to dress a calf, a lamb, or a sheep, and they supplied the Norwich market with these articles of consumption. The wives and daughters brought poultry made ready for the spit. The farmers or their servants brought the meat, both being conveyed to market on the Saturday in panniers—provincially "peds"—either on horseback or in market-carts, and ranged in rows in the ped-market, the market-women sitting in a line on one side of the peds. It need hardly be said that the wives and daughters of Norfolk farmers in these days are not seen sitting in a row in the market-place vending any such wares.

CHAPTER XIV.

FARMING IN EAST ANGLIA—FLUCTUATIONS IN WAGES—YIELD OF CORN—PRICE—INFLUENCE OF SEASONS—PARTIAL REDUCTION IN WAGES—CROP OF 1874—CHIEF SOURCES OF OUTLAY IN FARMING—RENT—TITHES—RATES—LABOUR—MANURE—AN ACRE OF WHEAT—COST OF CULTIVATING—PRESENT VALUE—OUTLAY ON FARM OF 780 ACRES—LABOUR BILL—NOMINAL WEEKLY WAGES DURING FIFTY-EIGHT YEARS—LABOURERS' ACTUAL WAGES—FARM OF 200 ACRES—PROFITS—WAGES AROUND NEWMARKET—FARM OF 950 ACRES—MACHINERY—INCREASED OUTLAY FOR MANUAL LABOUR—WAGES—INCREASE OF STOCK KEPT—PARTLY ACCOUNTS FOR INCREASED COST OF LABOUR—CROPPING—SAINFOIN—RESULTS OF LABOUR DISPUTES ON HUSBANDRY.

IT is not easy to find farm-accounts accurately kept and extending over a lengthened period. I give, therefore, from some books very carefully kept by a leading farmer near Bury St Edmunds, the fluctuations in wages on his farm during the last twenty-seven years, premising that the figures represent actual cash payments—the nominal weekly wages of an adult able-bodied labourer taken at the same period, in May, and not including harvest-money or extras. In 1847 the weekly wage was 12s. ; 1848, 10s. ; 1849-50, 9s. ; 1851-52, 8s. ; 1853, 9s. ; 1854-56, 12s. ; 1857, 11s. ; 1858-60, 10s. ; 1861-62, 11s. ; 1863-66, 10s. ; 1867, 11s. ; 1868, 12s. ; 1869-71, 10s. ; 1872, 12s. ; 1873-74, 13s. This statement, which is undoubtedly trustworthy, may be taken as a fair standard of wages in West Suffolk—if anything, rather higher than the average. It disposes of the

common notion that the wages of an agricultural labourer have slowly increased, without retrograding, in the last quarter of a century; and it suggests some curious questions as to the purchasing power of 13s. weekly in 1874 when compared with 12s. weekly in 1847. The intermediate rise and fall in wages appears to have been due partly to the existence of surplus labour in the district, and in part also to variations in the price of corn. The following figures referring to yield and price of corn show what these variations were since 1850 upon the farm to which they refer; and I believe, on the whole, they accurately represent wages and prices in the county. The average yield per acre on the farm is given in bushels; the price is at per coomb of four bushels:—

Weekly Wages.	Year.	Bushels, Wheat, per Acre.	Price per Coomb.	Bushels, Barley, per Acre.	Price per Coomb.
<i>s. d.</i>			<i>s. d.</i>		<i>s. d.</i>
9 0	1850	32	20 6	40	11 6
8 0	1851	32	20 0	44	14 6
8 0	1852	30	23 6	46	16 0
9 0	1853	30	42 0	44	19 0
12 0	1854	52	36 0	52	17 0
12 0	1855	33	38 0	54	19 0
12 0	1856	35	35 0	47	23 0
11 0	1857	37	25 0	48	19 6
10 0	1858	36	23 6	38	17 0
10 0	1859	37	24 0	39	13 6
10 0	1860	32	27 0	44	24 0
11 0	1861	37	30 3	44	20 6
11 0	1862	28	24 3	44	18 6
10 0	1863	43	20 6	51	18 0
10 0	1864	28	20 6	47	16 0
10 0	1865	39	23 0	34	17 6
10 0	1866	37	28 0	41	23 6
11 0	1867	36	35 0	44	20 6
12 0	1868	35	26 0	38	23 6
10 0	1869	41	22 0	36	17 0
10 0	1870	24	27 9	26	17 9
10 0	1871	32	29 0	44	19 6
12 0	1872	28	26 0	38	22 0
13 0	1873	30	31 0	38	24 0

The corn averages are rather high in price, because, as a rule, none of the dross corn was sent to market, but was kept for consumption on the farm. It should be added that the farm is a light-land farm, containing, exclusive of pasture, about 370 acres of arable land. The statistics are of interest from more than one point of view. Among other things, they show upon an average farm—highly cultivated, and with no stint of capital—how the seasons tell upon the business of farming, and how a farmer's staple produce may dwindle from 52 bushels per acre down to less than half; how his land from year to year will yield varying quantities over which his skill and his outlay can have little influence; and how prices rise and fall from causes equally beyond his control.

Townspeople for the most part know so little of modern farming, the capital it requires, and its chief heads of expenditure, that some information upon this point, supplied at my request by Suffolk and Cambridgeshire farmers of standing and experience, will perhaps be interesting and instructive. The first farm consists of rather more than 1100 acres, of which 670 are arable, 130 pasture, and the rest heath and waste. About half the arable acreage is mixed soil; the other moiety is light land. About half the pasture consists of low meadow; the rest is sheep-walk. On this farm the rent is £770; tithes are £182; rates, £94. From April 2, 1873, till April 2, 1874, the sum of £1094 was paid for labour. The regular staff of men employed all the year round suffices for harvest-work, so that no fresh hands are taken on at harvest-time. During the year the following were thus employed: 19 able-bodied men, 3 old men, 2 young men under 20, and 4 boys. Cake, corn, and artificial manure

during the year cost £679. This was £300 less than the farmer spent in the previous year. Owing to the labour difficulty he grazed no bullocks last winter. His system of balancing is to make a yearly valuation just after harvest. Thus, in the first week of September 1873, he found that £8973 was a fair valuation with which to charge the ensuing year. This amount included live and dead stock, corn, and implements; and a comparison with the estimates of the previous year would show, approximately, the financial results of the twelvemonth's farming. The live stock and corn are the two items which alter in value every year. The dead-stock account is carried forward from year to year. At the date mentioned the live stock consisted of 25 horses and colts, 53 head of neat cattle, 54 score of sheep and lambs, which were wintered on the farm, and about 100 hogs. My informant followed his father in the tenancy of the farm about seven years since, and now finds his labour bill £200 a-year more than it was during the first year of his occupation. An increased outlay for manual labour, in spite of the heavy work now done by machinery, is an apparent anomaly of which you find repeated instances. Indeed it seems to be a general if not invariable rule, that though high farming means economy of labour, it is only an economy relatively to production. I believe the average number of labourers per acre in regular employ will be found considerably greater upon large farms, where machinery is used, than upon small farms where there is little or no machinery. High farming upon large farms means, in fact, an increased staff of hands, supplemented by the highest possible development of machine-labour, operating upon a highly-manured soil, and repaid by more numerous crops and increased production.

The average value of an acre of wheat in 1873 was £9, 13s. 9d. In 1874, with an exceptionally plentiful yield, it was £8, 16s. 10½d. This estimate of value has a curious bearing upon the following detailed calculation by the farmer of his outlay in producing an acre of wheat. It refers to the best part of his arable land where wheat only is grown; and after the first item, the work is accounted for in the order in which it would be done throughout the year. Some fields would require more tillage, but the details here given represent the ordinary preparation required upon land which is in a fit and proper state for cultivation:—

Rent, tithe, rates, and taxes per acre,	£1 10 0
Farmyard manure (10 loads), and labour in spreading, 4s.,	2 0 0
Folding with sheep,	1 0 0
Ploughing,	0 7 0
Rolling, drill-roll,	0 1 6
Harrowing before drilling,	0 0 9
Drilling,	0 2 0
Seed, 2 bushels (tithe commutation price, 28s. per coomb),	0 14 0
Harrowing after drill,	0 0 6
Rolling (if season permits),	0 1 6
Harrowing,	0 0 6
Bird-keeping,	0 1 0
Top-dressing, 1 cwt. nitrate of soda,	0 17 0
Hoeing and weeding, hand and horse labour,	0 7 0
Harvesting and thatching,	0 14 0
Thrashing and dressing, and expenses incidental thereto,	0 10 0
Marketing and delivering,	0 2 6
Interest of money,	0 8 0
	<hr/>
	£8 17 3

Such is the outlay which the farmer must make before he can put into his pocket a penny from the proceeds of the crop, and then he is dependent upon the

seasons for growth, ripening, and harvesting. Even if the seasons are propitious and his crops abundant, it does not follow that he will be free from losses. Foreign producers, blessed with a more certain climate and a more fruitful soil, will send their grain by ship-loads, and, happily for British consumers, will confront his abundance with greater abundance still. Such is his fate if his land yields much grain. If it yields little, he has no monopoly of production, like the manufacturer, and therefore has but little hope of making up by high prices for short quantity. Happily, again, for bread-winners and bread-eaters, foreign markets in that event supply their wants, and forbid the farmer from profiting by scarcity. At the prices of corn in September 1874, the balance against the farmer upon the outlay just set forth amounted to $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. an acre. This was the splendid reward for what would be called high farming. A crop of wheat upon land of this description would vary from five to nine coombs ($2\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ quarters) per acre. Some persons may object that a portion of the manure would not be taken up by the wheat crop, but would remain in the land, and ought therefore to go to the credit of the succeeding crop. My informant is not of that opinion. Upon light land he does not set much store by the virtue thus left in the land, and says he would rather pay for the field being in a clean state than for any unexhausted value of the manure put into it the year before.

The details that follow relate to a farm of 780 acres, of which 38 are wood, 20 pasture, and 722 arable. Of the latter about 5 per cent would be waste. Part of the land is light; part is good mixed soil. The rent is £1080;

the tithe, £224; rates, £106. The accounts are made up to October 11, as this is the time farms are usually entered upon; and in 1872-73, the manure purchased came to £110; artificial manure, £105. This expenditure on manure was about £100 less than the average of previous years. The corn consumed by stock was valued at £1143; oilcake for stock, £342; seed-corn cost £369; machinery, £71; blacksmith, £58; carpenter, £12; horses, £72; harness, £27; vermin-killing (which should probably be added to labour), £8; and sundry payments came to £257. The year's labour-bill was £1330. Thus, the outlay upon these items was about £5315, exclusive of interest upon capital; and the labour account represents about 34s. per acre. The following figures show the total paid for labour upon the farm during the last seventeen years, and they show also the amount given in beer. A good deal of difference will be observed in the cost of labour from year to year, even when the rate of wages is the same. This difference is caused by the variation in seasons, much less labour being required in a dry than in a wet season. Indeed, the effect of a drought in reducing wages sometimes extends into the year following, owing to shorter crops to be gathered, and a smaller quantity of corn to be threshed. It will be seen what little difference seems to have been produced by the latest agricultural machinery in reducing the total wage account. Steam-threshing caused a considerable economy in labour as compared with flail-threshing; but this result is not shown, as steam-threshing was adopted upon the farm before 1857, when the figures begin:—

TOTAL LABOUR FOR THE YEARS ENDING OCTOBER 11.

	Total Labour.	Including Beer.
1857,	£1266 19 0	£55 12 0
1858,	1192 5 0	54 5 0
1859,	1221 14 0	82 5 0
1860,	1298 18 0	55 13 0
1861,	1265 10 0	54 15 0
1862,	1330 17 0	87 18 0
1863,	1119 6 0	35 17 0
1864,	1076 0 0	31 2 0
1865,	1040 18 0	85 2 0
1866,	1158 5 0	*0 0 0
1867,	1275 2 0	117 7 0
1868,	1244 6 0	134 2 0
1869,	1126 17 0	93 5 0
1870,	1165 15 0	78 13 0
1871,	1043 11 0	50 2 0
1872,	1199 4 0	61 4 0
1873,	1318 17 0	11 6 0

One cause of the great variation in the value of the beer given is, that a quantity of malt or beer was in stock at the beginning of some of the years. The fairest way, therefore, would be to take the average of groups of years. Happily, since the *maximum* was reached in 1868, the quantity has been steadily diminishing. Here is an account, derived from the labour-books kept at this farm, of the fluctuation in the nominal rate of wages paid there during a period of 58 years: Between 1817 and 1821 inclusive, the wages paid were 10s. a-week; 1822-23, 8s.; 1824, 9s.; 1825, 10s.; 1826-30, 9s.; 1831-33, 10s.; 1834, 9s.; 1835-42, 10s.; 1843-46, 9s.; 1847, in May, 12s. (Irish famine)—November, 10s.; 1848-49, 9s.; 1850-52, 8s.; 1853, 9s.—in December, 10s.; 1854 (March), 11s.; 1855, 11s.—in December, 12s.; 1856, 11s.; 1857, 10s.;

* Beer omitted by mistake.

1858-60, 9s. ; 1861-62, 10s. ; 1863-65, 9s. ; 1866, 10s. ; 1867-68, 11s. ; 1869-71, 10s. ; 1872, 11s.—in October, 12s. ; 1873, 12s.—in April, 13s. ; 1874, 13s. Taking an average able-bodied farm-labourer at this nominal wage of 13s., what does he really earn? The following figures extracted from the labour-book answer this question. They extend from May 3, 1873, to May 2, 1874, and are the earnings of a farm-labourer, aged 37, not a horse-driver, but a fair average of the ordinary able-bodied labourers on the farm. He enjoys no advantages in day-work for which extra pay is allowed, as in some instances, and is never employed on Sundays, as some may be, in looking after horses and stock. During the year this man lost two and a half days through absence, besides a little time taken by him at his own request before and after harvest ; but he earned by day-work £24, 12s. 9½d. ; by piece-work, £13, 0s. 6½d. ; and by harvest-work, £8, 15s.—total, £46, 8s. 4d., or rather more than 17s. 10d. a-week in cash. Then he had the following perquisites : A house and good garden, for which he paid 1s. a-week, but which is valued by the farmer at the very moderate rent of £4, 10s. In the outskirts of a town it would be thought a catch at £9. The farmer, however, only puts down as the difference between rent paid and actual value of cottage, £1, 18s. The beer perquisite came to £1, 6s. ; fagots, 2s. 6d. ; coal, 10s. ; Christmas-box, 2s. 6d.—value of perquisites, £3, 19s. Total value of earnings and perquisites, £50, 7s.

Here are some details respecting a farm of another class, a small one of 200 acres, mixed soil, with three acres pasture and the remainder arable, the estimate of waste being 7 per cent. The amount paid in labour during the year was £426, or £2, 2s. 7d. per acre. It will be seen

that upon the farm nearly four times its size just mentioned, the cost of labour was 8s. 7d. per acre less. Besides men and boys, eight horses are required to work these 200 acres. The rent was £335; tithe, £83—total, £418. The average outlay for the last two years in cake and corn for feeding purposes and for artificial manure was £448, 10s. The wages paid to ordinary labourers were 13s. for five weeks in the year, 14s. for 43 weeks, and then come the four weeks of harvest, which make the average earnings throughout the year 17s. weekly in cash. The horse-keeper and stockman receive each 2s. a-week extra. The beer perquisite is not included in this calculation. The farmer here had allowed his books to be examined by an independent person from 1862 to 1871 inclusive, for the purpose of estimating profits; and during these ten years the profits amounted to £2671, or an average of £267 for interest on a capital of £2500, and also as the return for no common skill and for constant care and oversight. The years 1872-73 were more profitable, owing to the high price of meat and the good prices realised by wheat and barley. But in 1874 there was a serious loss on stock-feeding; and even if a farmer grew six bushels more wheat an acre than he grew in 1873, the fall in value made his crop worth less to him than the shorter crop of 1873. My informant argues that a net profit of £267 affords very little margin for allowing an increase of wages; and upon such returns as the farming of 1874 produced, there will be no margin at all. Since 1871, as will be seen by the table just given, agricultural wages have risen 3s. weekly—from 10s. to 13s. The labour on this 200-acre farm during the ten years 1862-71 amounted to £3236—an average of not quite

£324 per annum; but in 1873-74 the labour bill was £426, showing an increase of £102. If this £102 can be replaced by higher profits than were shown from 1862 to 1871, the farmer cannot complain; but at present prices he can have no such expectation. The sum of £102, then, must be viewed as a permanent deduction from the average yearly profit, bringing it down to £165 per annum; "and I ask you, or any reasonable being," says the farmer, "whether that is a fair remuneration upon my £2500 capital, and for a fair average amount of skill and strict personal attention?" The answer to the question may be left to the traders and manufacturers who read these lines, and who look for a return upon the capital invested in their business. I have every reason to trust the good faith of the farmer in this instance, and his statement throws some light on the question as to the margin of profit out of which farmers can afford to satisfy the demand for increased wages by their labourers. It must not always be assumed that in refusing to increase wages the farmer withholds something which he can well afford to pay.

The following figures refer to a heath farm of 950 acres, of which about 525 are arable and 130 pasture. The farm was taken by the father of my informant in the year 1834. At that time there was not a machine upon it, excepting such as were worked by hand. Shortly afterwards, however, the occupier bought a horse-power chaff-cutter. Some of the farm-books between 1834 and 1842 are lost, and therefore the separate amounts under the sub-joined heads for those years cannot be supplied. It may be stated, however, that the labour bill for the year 1835 did not amount to £500—less than 20s. an acre upon the arable land alone; and between 1834 and 1842 the outlay

for wages may be fairly put at an average of £550. The farm has been cultivated strictly on the four-course shift, so that the same acreage of corn has been maintained, except during the last five years, when the present occupier has been farming upon a system which involves the growth of less corn and the substitution of green crops. On the other hand, in the year 1867, 147 acres of arable land were added to the farm, which is now larger by that acreage :—

Year ending	Labour.			Cake, Corn, Manure, &c., purchased.		
1843, . . .	£627	0	0	£300	14	6
1844, . . .	620	8	10	482	12	4
1845, . . .	597	19	1½	482	12	4
* 1846, . . .	556	2	4	577	15	10
1847, . . .	690	14	3½	676	9	9
1848, . . .	623	6	7½	760	7	0
1849, . . .	646	10	10	711	0	6
† 1850, . . .	592	6	0	556	11	5
1851, . . .	569	15	4	682	11	4
1852, . . .	555	2	1	617	11	7
1853, . . .	624	1	4	755	1	3
1854, . . .	736	3	2	991	14	10
1855, . . .	797	7	8	1250	15	5
1856, . . .	775	18	1½	1210	15	9
1857, . . .	767	11	1	622	1	0
1858, . . .	731	12	7	980	17	11
‡ 1859, . . .	749	2	11	983	1	11
1860, . . .	794	5	8	915	1	3
1861, . . .	814	2	1	1159	18	11
§ 1862, . . .	785	10	6	1368	14	11
1863, . . .	766	2	8	1220	1	0
1864, . . .	712	4	1½	1189	14	4

* Guano first tried, and Lawes' turnip-manure first used.

† Horse-power threshing-machine bought, and nitrate of soda first tried.

‡ Reaping-machine bought this year.

§ Steam threshing-machine purchased.

|| There is a break in the accounts here till 1869.

Year ending	Labour.	Cake, Corn, Manure, &c., purchased.
1869, . . .	£906 7 0	£995 19 10
1870, . . .	916 3 6	1010 9 6
1871, . . .	879 15 1	907 12 6
1872, . . .	943 10 0	1104 6 2
1873 (ending Sept. 1),	964 3 8	820 15 0

The year ending September 1874, would show an addition to the labour bill of about £100. The fact prominently brought out by these figures is, that the introduction of machinery and of high farming increases the demand for manual labour instead of diminishing it. During the later years covered by these statistics, machine reapers and mowers and root-mincers have been used, and steam-power has been employed in threshing and for other purposes. Yet the money spent in manual labour has hitherto gradually increased, while at the same time the acreage of corn grown has diminished relatively to the size of the farm now and in 1834. On the other hand, the number of horses has been gradually reduced from nineteen in 1868 to fifteen at the present time by the use of double ploughs, and by keeping more land down in sainfoin. The farmer, too, applied one lesson he learnt from the lock-out, for he employed six men fewer in 1874 than in 1873. This reduction of staff was, no doubt, partly due to the dry season ; but the farmer, after being put to the test of the lock-out, is of opinion that he can permanently reduce the regular staff of men in his service. Here is a statement of the earnings of his labourers during the last twelve months. I may pass over the bailiff, the shepherd (more than seventy years old), with assistant, and the groom :—

J. B., over seventy years old, 2s. per day, extras when at piece-work ; cottage, £2, 10s. rent. He has harvested on

the farm for forty-eight consecutive years. J. W., over seventy years old, 11s. per week all the year round, and extras for an odd job. S. D., eight years on farm, head man, £50, 1s.; no rent. W. J., four years on farm, second man, £48, 10s.; single man. W. S., sixty years on farm, general work, £44, 12s.; £8 rent. J. B., eight years on farm, acre work, £50, 12s.; no rent. H. L., four years on farm, acre work, £47, 2s.; no rent. R. F., from a boy, thatching and general work, £48, 6s.; £2, 10s. rent. J. F., from a boy, machine, cart, &c., £49, 10s.; £3, 1s. rent. C. S., seven years on farm, general work, £45, 17s.; £3, 10s. rent. D. H., eight years on farm, machine-work, &c., £47, 5s.; cottage in another parish, one acre of land. J. W., jun., life on farm, stockman, £48, 9s.; £3 rent. C., about thirty years on farm, engineman, £47, 6s.; no rent. W., on farm from a boy, general work, £44, 16s.; £2, 15s. H. B., four years on farm, general work, £47, 8s.; single man. J. C. worked through winter upon estate work. J. S. worked through winter, and then left without giving notice. H. E., from a boy, now about twenty, has had 13s. per week, and extra in harvest, &c. W. C., about eighteen, has 12s. per week, and extra in harvest, &c. J. D., about eighteen, left and went to Leicestershire, returned again, did not find it answer, has 2s. per day, and extras. C., age sixteen, 7s. per week, and extras. G. F., age fifteen, 6s. J. F., age thirteen, 4s. W. S., age fourteen, 5s. H. S., age fourteen, 6s., all inclusive of extras.

In looking through the labour-books on the farm just mentioned, you find that nearly one-half the outlay for horse and hand labour on the farm is laid out during the spring and summer in growing food for stock. Again,

during the winter months more than one-half the labour is employed in looking after the cattle and sheep on the farm, and in preparing food for the stock. Modern farming differs from old-fashioned farming chiefly, perhaps, in the greater quantity of stock fed and sent to market. The farmer finds that, to make a living, he must not, in common talk, "look to the barn-door for everything." Wheat is not the remunerative crop it used to be. On some land around Bury St Edmunds perhaps the best barley in England is grown, and the Burton brewers are ready to give good prices for it. But, unless the soil is one peculiarly adapted for white straw crops, the farmer now must breed or feed, or breed as well as feed. A man of great experience here is of opinion that, within the last twenty-five or thirty years, the number of sheep and cattle kept on most farms—including heavy land as well as stock farms—has nearly trebled. Farmers, therefore, have done much—and of course it was their interest to do so—in meeting the demand for meat, though in spite of their efforts consumption has outstripped supply, and the price of meat is increasing, has increased, and is not likely to diminish. The increase of stock upon farms accounts to a great extent for the fact that with the increased use of machinery has come a greater demand for manual labour in high farming. What has just been stated as to the farm I am now noticing shows that during three parts of the year the stock is properly chargeable with quite half the labour employed. Forty years ago the father of my informant, who then held the farm, grew as great an acreage of corn as is now grown, and did not employ so many men and boys, nor any machinery for the first ten years of his occupation, though he employed more horses. One explanation, which the

foregoing remarks suggest, is, that he only kept about half as many sheep as are now wintered on the same farm, and about half as many head of neat stock. During the summer, however, he fed as many sheep and lambs as his son now keeps in that season. All the corn on the farm is now thrashed by steam. Steam-machinery is used for cutting chaff and grinding corn, and horse-power for mincing roots and breaking cake. All this work used to be done by hand, yet the father employed fewer labourers than the son now employs, and the father's expenditure for labour continued for some time at the rate of about £500 a-year; whereas the son, who uses all this steam and horse power, is spending (with 150 more acres, it is true) £1100 in manual labour.

The farmer in this instance is sowing less corn, and trying a system which he hopes will make farms of light and mixed soil more self-supporting, by rendering them less dependent upon artificial grasses, and reducing some of the present heavy items for expenditure upon cake, artificial manure, and labour. He has found that upon light land sainfoin resists the drought better than most other descriptions of feed, and he also attaches great importance to the growth of a good plant of beetroot. Assuming, therefore, that he thinks it right to grow 20 acres of beet every year, the course of husbandry upon six plots of 20 acres each would be as follows: 1. Beetroot after barley, instead of small seeds. 2. Wheat after beetroot, in course. 3. Sainfoin after wheat, instead of turnips. 4. Sainfoin instead of barley. 5. Sainfoin instead of clover, &c. 6. Wheat after sainfoin, in course. The three-year-old sainfoin is followed by wheat, and there is always an acreage of sainfoin of three different ages upon the farm. This

crop, it is said, supplies capital feed, whether cut for hay, or used in the yard for horses and cattle during the summer, or given as chaff, or fed off on the land. The acreage so occupied requires no manure and little labour, and possesses other advantages which, in the farmer's opinion, more than compensate for the loss of 20 acres of barley. Here is the yield upon a field of 16 acres of sainfoin during three consecutive years: 1868—first crop of hay, 33 waggon-loads; second crop fed off by lambs. 1869—first crop of hay, 35 waggon-loads; second crop, 80 sacks of seed. 1870—first crop of hay, 33 waggon-loads; second crop, seed estimated at 224 bushels. Practical men must judge for themselves as to the merits of this system. The farmer is convinced that it is, at any rate, well adapted to his own land, and expects, by means of it, to dispense with four men and four horses when it is in full operation, besides greatly increasing his food for sheep and cattle, and thus growing more corn upon the fields which are cultivated for corn, to compensate him somewhat for the smaller acreage of corn which his system involves. One point upon which my informant here insisted—and he is a gentleman of great intelligence and practical skill—is that any falling off in the supply of labour, whether from a strike, a lock-out, or from natural causes, would reduce the supply of meat rather than the production of corn. From April 1 to the end of July about one-half of his men were employed in growing roots and getting in the hay—in fact, in producing a supply of winter food for sheep and cattle; and from the completion of harvest to April again, one-half the men and boys were engaged in securing roots, cutting chaff, mincing and preparing food, littering yards, and attending to sheep and cattle. Thus the winter's work is

regulated to a great extent by the operations of the spring and summer ; and summing the matter up in the farmer's words, "Few men in spring and summer means few roots or little hay. This again means no stock during autumn and winter, and no stock during autumn and winter means fourteen fewer men and boys than I employed last year." I should think it would also very often mean no rent for the landlord and bankruptcy to the farmer.

The moral drawn by my informant was, that if the labour market is disturbed by Trades-Unionism, or any other cause, the first to suffer is the labourer, the next the consumer, while the last and least sufferer is the farmer.

CHAPTER XV.

FARMING OUTLAY—FURTHER DETAILS—PROFITS—LOSSES IN STOCK-KEEPING—AGRICULTURAL RETURNS—CATTLE AND SHEEP IN EASTERN COUNTIES—OTHER COUNTIES COMPARED—WALES AND SCOTLAND—PAROCHIAL RELIEF—POOR-LAW EXPENDITURE—SANITARY PROVISION IN VILLAGES—WORK-PAPER—OUTDOOR RELIEF—NEWMARKET UNION—EXPENDITURE—AVERAGE PRICE OF WHEAT—RURAL POPULATION—TRANSFER OF, TO TOWNS—EXCESS OF BIRTHS OVER DEATHS—EDUCATION—LEADS TO MIGRATION—VILLAGE CLUBS.

I WILL now give the chief items of outlay upon four farms in a state of high cultivation in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. The first consists of 1076 acres, of which 162 are heath, 50 pasture, and 864 arable, the arable land comprising 384 acres of light and 480 of strong land on chalk. The net rental received by the landlord (free of property tax) is £1477. The gross rental paid by the tenant, including land tax, tithe, rates, and taxes, is £2012. The amount distributed in cash for labour during the year ending Lady-day last was £1453. Besides this sum, the farmer at harvest-time gave his men malt and hops worth £68, 14s.; the harvest-supper cost him £9, 13s., and he estimates the beer given during the remainder of the year at £37, 15s.,—making an addition to the labour bill of £116, 2s., or a total of £1569. The money spent on

oilcake during the year was £873, 3s. ; beans, peas, and locust-beans, £339, 14s. ; maize, £205, 19s. 6d. ; malt chives, £130, 10s. 6d. ; oats, £588, 11s. ; artificial manures, £276, 18s. ; making £2414, 16s. spent in feed and manure, and a total outlay of close on £6000 upon this item, with rental and labour. The farmer here has carefully worked out his profits during the seven years he has cultivated his present holding ; and after debiting his housekeeping account fairly with every article of farm produce consumed, he says he has only made 7 per cent on the capital employed, about £9000. I may add that he farms under lease, and therefore enjoys security of tenure. On another farm of 800 acres, the cost of bought manure during the year was £340 ; cake and corn bought, £660 ; rent and tithe came to £1130 ; rates, fire insurance, &c., £170 ; cost of labour, £1775. This farm consists of light, easy-working land, with only ten acres of pasture, the remainder being arable. On another farm of 370 acres (300 arable, mixed soil, and 70 pasture) the rental is 50s. per acre, including tithe and rates ; the charge for labour is 37s. 6d. per acre ; the average earnings of the labourers are 17s. per week in cash, and the perquisites or extras are reckoned at about 3s. per acre. The cost of cake averages £500 a-year ; artificial manure, £220 ; corn for cattle, £300 ; corn for horses, £250 ; repairs to machinery and coal for thrasher, £100. About 26 acres of sewage-land are worked with this farm, and the chief produce is rye-grass, which supplies food for the stock during the summer months, so that the farmer is able to feed 50 bullocks all the year round—an unusual number in proportion to acreage. The capital employed here is about £7000. On a fourth farm of 565 acres (440 arable,

part heavy and part mixed soil, and 125 grass) the rental comes to 50s. per acre, including tithe and rates; the average weekly earnings of the labourer are 18s. in cash, with about 3s. an acre of perquisites and extras; the annual cost of cake is £500; corn for feeding, £350; corn for horses, £300; coals for engine, £100; repairs to machinery, £150.

I believe there is hardly one of these farms on which there was not a loss, and a heavy loss, upon the operations of the year ending Michaelmas 1874. A farmer of great experience and skill, who has farmed rather more than 500 acres of light land during the last twenty years, calculates he has made an average profit of 10 per cent during that period upon a capital of £6000. This farmer was scrupulously accurate in distinguishing between farming and housekeeping accounts. He allowed nothing for his own oversight of the farm, and charged himself with rent of farmhouse, and its due proportion of rates and taxes, as well as with every fowl, egg, and pound of butter consumed by his family. Much depends upon the nature of the soil. Some light-land farms in Norfolk and Suffolk have impoverished or ruined a long succession of tenants, and would probably be dear if rent-free. A large proportion of the cultivated land in both counties is sandy, the surface-soil for the most part being made by manuring and cultivation, with a subsoil of hot gravel, sand, or crag. On land of this description, varying in quality, dry seasons in a naturally dry climate play sad havoc with profits. The farmer last mentioned lost £5000 by three successive years of drought. A broad back is required to meet such a run of ill-luck, which no foresight can avert. From all the information I have been able to collect, it would be going

quite far enough to assume that the profits of farming on the light, sandy soils of the Eastern Counties averaged 6 per cent. Upon good mixed soil or heavy-land farms, cultivated under favourable conditions, profits may run as high as 10 or 12 per cent. A high authority on agriculture, Mr C. S. Read, M.P., has averaged the profits of farming in Norfolk at 8 per cent; and the statements made to me in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire confirm this estimate.

Here is a statement given to me by a practical farmer of the percentage of losses in stock-keeping on his farm of 550 acres during 1873-4. There had been no epidemic upon the farm, and I believe the stock are exceptionally well managed, though the list of casualties is above the average. *Horses*: Total number kept, 24. Three died—1 from inflammation, 1 from strangulated bowel, 1 in foaling (through malformation); total estimated value, £140. *Sheep*: Number on farm, 600; number lost by death, 30—value, £75. *Neat stock* (cows, calves, bullocks): Total number kept, 90; losses (2 cows, 3 calves, and 4 bullocks), 9—estimated value, £90. Total estimated value of stock kept, £3500; estimated losses, £305. I know of no trustworthy statistics showing the general average of annual losses through disease upon a stock-farm. Of course these would vary greatly according to ill-luck, bad management, or bad seasons; but from the scattered particulars given to me by farmers elsewhere, I fancy that outsiders have very little notion of the percentage of losses of this description, setting aside altogether the more serious ravages of foot-and-mouth disease, lung disease, or the happily rarer visitation of cattle plague. Taking ordinary casualties and epidemics into account,

the loss upon a stock-farm probably averages 8 per cent. Whatever may be the precise figure, the liability to such losses must not be overlooked in reckoning the profit of breeding and feeding; and it is a liability under which small farmers occasionally come to great grief, from the large proportion which these losses bear to their working capital.

From the Agricultural Returns for 1874, I extract some figures, which give at a glance a tolerably complete notion of farming in the Eastern Counties. Lincoln, perhaps, cannot properly be reckoned one of the "Eastern Counties," but the character of the farming there stands so deservedly high, that it may be included in the group for purposes of comparison:—

	Total Acreage.	Total Acre- age under all kinds of Crops, Bare Fallow, and Grass.	Under Corn Crops.	Under Green Crops, including Clover, Sain- foin, and Grasses in rotation.	Permanent Pasture, excluding Heath Land.
Cambridge,	524,926	482,054	257,537	132,317	74,337
Essex, . .	1,055,133	818,865	418,757	175,989	181,531
Huntingdon,	229,515	207,927	101,288	37,036	58,550
Lincoln, .	1,767,962	1,469,819	625,245	401,668	416,869
Norfolk, .	1,356,173	1,063,792	460,385	366,781	229,479
Suffolk, . .	949,825	762,340	387,356	205,672	143,606

The percentage of corn crops to the total cultivated acreage is greater in these six counties than in any in the United Kingdom. In Cambridgeshire the percentage is 53.4; in Essex, 51.1; in Huntingdon, 48.7; in Lincoln, 42.5; in Norfolk, 43.2; and in Suffolk, 50.8. This proportion of corn-growing area is very much larger than the average throughout England, where the percentage of corn-growing crops to cultivated land in 1873 was only 31.4.

The farmers in the Eastern Counties, therefore, do their duty in the growth of corn, Cambridgeshire standing absolutely first on the list of corn-growing counties in the United Kingdom, then Essex, Suffolk next, then Huntingdon, Norfolk, and Lincoln. Let us now see what part the farmers there take in the supply of meat.

	CATTLE.		SHEEP.	
	Total No. of Cattle.	Proportion to every 100 Acres in cultivation.	Total No. of Sheep.	Proportion to every 100 Acres in cultivation.
Cambridge, .	47,965	9.9	324,962	67.4
Essex, . . .	80,443	9.8	406,259	49.6
Huntingdon, .	26,345	12.6	154,824	74.4
Lincoln, . .	212,800	14.5	1,629,011	110.8
Norfolk, . .	118,990	11.1	795,433	74.7
Suffolk, . .	70,894	9.3	505,543	66.3

Excluding decimals, the proportion of cattle to cultivated acreage throughout all England in 1873 averaged 17, and of sheep 80, per 100 acres. Thus, excepting Lincoln in the matter of sheep, the six Eastern Counties would, without further explanation, appear to be below the average both in cattle and sheep. The greater the breadth of land in corn, the smaller seems to be the number of cattle and sheep produced. Such, at least, is the impression conveyed by the Returns; and the converse of this proposition is pretty nearly true. Cheshire, Lancashire, and Leicester are at the head of the English counties in cattle-rearing, the number of cattle to every 100 acres there being respectively 32, 31, and 29; but the percentage of corn-crops in those counties is only 16, 13, and 23. Again, the Returns would lead one to suppose that Westmoreland and Northumberland yield more sheep than any other English

counties—146 and 139 sheep per 100 acres. But it must now be explained that in the Agricultural Returns this is the proportion of sheep not to total area, but to total cultivated acreage. For a comparison of corn-growth such a method is fair enough. Surely, however, in estimating the relative number of cattle and sheep in different parts of Great Britain we must take some account of the acreage of heath or mountain land which helps to maintain them. Sheep-farming in counties which possess wide tracts of mountain or moor cannot be fairly contrasted on any other basis with sheep-farming in counties having no such command of sheep-runs. If, then, in estimating the relative proportion of stock in each county we base that proportion upon total area instead of cultivated acreage, the invidious distinction which has often been drawn by Union delegates and others between East Anglian farmers and farmers elsewhere can no longer be made. One or two examples will suffice. In Sutherland, the Returns show 935 sheep for every 100 cultivated acres, but to the total area the proportion is 50 only. In Argyle, the proportion per 100 cultivated acres is 940, but on every 100 acres of total area there are only 19. Judged by this standard, Suffolk, instead of being greatly in the rear of those two counties, produces 3 more sheep per 100 acres than Sutherland, and nearly three times as many as Argyle; while the comparison is still more favourable to Huntingdon, Norfolk, and Lincoln. Westmoreland contains 69 sheep and 12 cattle to every 100 acres of total area; Suffolk contains 53 sheep and 7 cattle; and Cambridge 61 sheep and 9 cattle. Again, in Northumberland there are 73 sheep and 8 cattle to every 100 acres of area; whereas Lincoln produces 92 sheep and 12 cattle. Thus Lincoln produces a larger pro-

portion of sheep and cattle to total acreage than both Westmoreland and Northumberland, which in the Returns head all other English counties in this kind of production. Consumers of beef and mutton in our towns have often been told how far ahead are the farmers in Wales and Scotland in rearing or feeding sheep and cattle. Now, the number of cattle in Scotland in 1874 was 1,154,846, and of sheep 7,389,487, upon a total area of 19,496,132 acres; while in Wales there were 665,105 cattle and 3,064,696 sheep upon 4,721,823 acres. In England the total number of cattle was 4,305,540, and of sheep 19,859,758, upon 32,597,398 acres; and in the six Eastern counties there were 557,437 cattle and 4,016,032 sheep upon 5,883,534 acres. Thus these six counties contained more sheep by 951,336 than the whole of Wales, with all its grazing-ground, and considerably more than half as many as the whole of Scotland, upon less than one-third the area. Even allowing, therefore, for lake, deer forest, and barren mountain-side, the disproportion which has been made the subject of such frequent comment vanishes if the figures are looked at from this point of view. It must also be remembered that two moor or mountain sheep will hardly make one sheep of the kind usually bred or fed in the Eastern Counties. This is a most material point. In the official statistics a sheep is a sheep; but weight of mutton to the acre is the thing to be considered. The same remark holds good of beasts. The Eastern Counties afford, perhaps, the best market in England for calves and lean cattle from many parts of the North and the West. These beasts are fattened here and sent to London increased to double, treble, or even four times their original weight. Both here and

in the district where they are reared they figure in the Returns as bullocks ; but when they leave the Eastern Counties, they count, in weight of beef, for two at least of the lean kine which go to swell the numbers in some of the rearing counties. In short, it may be said pretty safely that in weight of beef and mutton, as well as in corn, the six Eastern counties, acre for acre, contribute more to the food of the nation than any other group of counties in the kingdom.

A Suffolk labourer who was insisting to a poor-law guardian upon his claim to medical relief at the expense of the parish expressed himself in this wise : "I've got five children. Do you mean to tell me I ought to pay for the doctor when they're ill? I should like to know for whose benefit I have these children. Is it for my benefit? I say no. I say it's for the good of the country. God Almighty sends us children in the course of nature, and if they ail anything it's only right we should get help for them. I arn't a-going to pay no doctor's bill. There ought to be a Government doctor in every parish for such as we." This man has one boy who is a half-timer, and he and his family earn between them about 22s. a-week. Another man, with eight children, in urging the same claim, took the same line. "What can a man do better for his country, I should like to know, than to have seven or eight children as I have? How would your farms get on if we were not to have no children? What would you do if there were no boys to go on to the land, and no girls to go to service?" Now, these speeches are not given as types of rustic feeling universally or even generally prevailing ; but they embody a tradition which lingers in many a village,

and finds occasional vent in the claim to relief as a right involving little or no loss of independence.* It is a tradition dating probably from the bad days when half the able-bodied farm-labourers in a parish were receiving poor-relief, and the wages paid were merely a supplement to the rates. Founders of the village medical club or the county benefit society have still to fight with this feeling, which may not always be expressed, though I have heard

* Here is an instructive comment upon the text: At the annual conference of the National Labourers' Union held at Leamington in June 1874, the solicitors, Messrs Shaen, Roscoe, & Massey, reported, amongst other cases in which they had been retained on behalf of the Union, the summoning of a Unionist at Sevenoaks by the guardians of the poor for neglecting to support his lunatic son; and summonses against two brothers, married men, one earning 16s., and the other £1 per week, for neglecting to support their mother, who was in receipt of parochial relief. It appeared that she had been receiving this relief for about seven years, and that no application had been made to the men, who were both ratepayers, to contribute to her support, until they joined the Union, when summonses were at once issued. "We are of opinion," the solicitors say, "that the Act of Elizabeth was never intended to apply to persons in the condition of agricultural labourers, but only to persons who, being in the words of the Act 'of sufficient ability,' neglect to provide for their poor relatives, and allow them to become chargeable upon the parish; but as the Act in no way defines what 'sufficient ability' is, that question is left to the discretion of justices in each case. . . . We attended the summonses, and contended that the men were not 'of sufficient ability' to maintain their mother, and farther, that the Act gave no power to order a contribution; and therefore, unless the magistrates found that the defendants were in a position wholly to maintain their parent, they were not within the Act at all. The bench, however, would not accept that argument, and ordered the men to pay 1s. per week each; upon which we gave notice of appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench, but afterwards received instructions from the general secretary not to proceed with it." Very wise instructions, most people will think.

of cases in which it has been blurted out with the rudest frankness. "Why should we lay by money? Why should we deny ourselves our 'baccy and beer? It's all to relieve the rates; that's what it is! The farmers and the squires want to save their pockets!"* Rural society, like most other societies, is complex. In one cottage you find a manly self-respect, a horror of poor-law relief in any form, and a resolution to avert it by any sacrifices. The spread of sick and burial clubs, local and affiliated, in the rural districts, attests the growth of this healthy sentiment. But there is no use in blinking the fact that it is by no means a universal sentiment, and that in other cottages you may find the poor-house looked forward to as not only the inevitable but the natural place of retirement for the infirm or aged poor. In no case, of course, is such a prospect deemed satisfactory, but it is one which is acquiesced in much too easily. I believe that the labourers' Unions have done something to nourish among both members and non-members a spirit of self-reliance in this and other ways. Education is doing still more, but as yet can only influence the young.

Other proofs that the labourers are better off than they

* " 'A good sick club is a good thing,' I said once to a labouring man's wife in this parish. 'Yes, sir,' said she to me with the greatest indifference, 'it is a good thing to *screen the parish.*' It seemed to her that she had very little interest in the matter. It was very kind, in fact, and liberal and disinterested of her to pay in 18s. a-year when in health, that the parish might not have so much to pay out when her husband was ill. Do not let me, however, cause you to think that all or many are so mean-spirited. I am proud to say that in our own church club we have 285 members who appear to be contented, as they certainly are uncomplaining."—"Master and Man," *Lecture by Rev. Dr Gee, Vicar of Abbot's Langley.*

used to be have been mentioned in their turn,* but perhaps the most practical test is the poor-law expenditure. Some description of the Newmarket Union will show the character of the relief now given there and elsewhere. The Union comprises 29 parishes, mostly in Cambridgeshire, the rest in Suffolk. The population in 1871 was 29,501; the acreage is 97,151; and the total rateable value £177,732. At the time of my visit not one able-bodied man was receiving indoor relief, and only seven able-bodied women. In the workhouse there were 20 men and 16 women temporarily disabled, with 39 old and infirm men and 17 women. The number of boys and girls was 50, of whom all but 12 were under nine years of age. The total number of inmates was 149, against 161 in the corresponding week of last year. Here, as in other districts, the workhouse has become really an asylum for the aged and infirm poor, those temporarily disabled from work, imbeciles, and orphan or deserted children. The week's account of outdoor relief stood thus—and I add a comparison of the corresponding week in three previous years:—

	Adults not Able-bodied.	Adults Able-bodied.	Children under 16 years.	Total.	Amount of Relief.
1870-1	1004	297	558	1859	£191
1871-2	950	172	433	1555	163
1872-3	892	170	349	1411	155
1873-4	846	144	352	1342	145

Thus there has been a gradual reduction in the numbers relieved and in the cost of the relief. The health of the

* A Union delegate in the Eastern Counties who is trying to establish a land company states that he "knows many labourers worth from £5 to £150" who would be glad to invest their money in such a company. "I am sure," writes a farmer, "a good deal of money is hoarded by some farm-labourers. I should not be surprised if more is so saved than by an equal number of mechanics."

various parishes was never better, and good health has quite as much to do in reducing the cost of poor-relief as good wages and prosperity. Dr Rogers, ex-President of the Poor-Law Medical Officers' Association, says that 65 per cent of pauperism is caused by sickness. If this estimate be accurate, or anything like accurate, parochial economists ought to become the most zealous sanitary reformers. Of course, we know that all the sickness which leads up to pauperism is not preventible sickness; but much of it is; and in town and village too the truth may be taken to heart by local administrators that they who spend may save—that rates may be permanently reduced by a wise outlay. Three or four villages in this Union were pointed out to me which used to be hardly ever free from fever, chiefly from the want of a wholesome supply of water; but when the parochial authorities sank wells and fixed public pumps the fever was stayed. Taking the lowest ground, it would be hardly possible to find better interest for such an expenditure: the sickness, suffering, and mortality prevented, the standard of vitality raised, the wage-earning power continued without break, must and do tell their tale upon the rates. Vestries and boards of guardians cannot control wages or prevent the distress which may come through an overstocked labour market and dearth of employment, but in every village they may do much to check one prime cause of pauperism—disease; and, of all sanitary precautions, care for a pure and fairly abundant supply of water stands first. It will be seen from the figures just given that outdoor relief of a temporary kind is given to able-bodied adults, though I cannot distinguish between the sexes. A blank form of certificate is furnished to a male applicant of this class, and must be

filled up by his last employer. It runs thus: "I have employed John Jones from" (the date and period of discharge are here filled in, together with the cause of discharge, whether on account of illness, want of employment, neglect, or otherwise). "His pay amounted to——." This certificate is printed in blank, and bears the following printed endorsement: "To the Board of Guardians of Newmarket Union. The bearer (name), of the parish of (name), has applied to us, the undersigned, for work, but we could not employ him." The neighbouring farmers, as ratepayers, have an interest in keeping the man off the rates; but if they cannot give him work, and say so in the form provided in this "work-paper," as it is called, his claim to relief is complete. In cases of temporary emergency the relieving officer gives outdoor relief, not in money, but in kind, by an order upon tradesmen for shop goods. If it is not merely a case of temporary relief, an able-bodied man must first show by a work-paper that he has applied for work in vain at the neighbouring farms, and he must then come into the house with his family. But he rarely likes to do this; and most applicants go further away till they find work. If a village is healthy, the relieving officer finds a very limited number of applications for help from able-bodied men, and those chiefly from the idle and worthless. A respectable working man who is thrown out of work will generally search till he finds fresh employment, rather than come on the parish. The following table shows the amount spent upon the relief of the poor within the Newmarket Union during the last 18 years, and the average price of wheat per quarter during the same period. It will be seen that the expenditure

rises pretty regularly with the price of wheat, and falls when wheat is cheap :—

Year.	Expenditure. £	Average Price of Wheat. s. d.
1856-7.....	17,236	69 2
1857-8	15,245	56 4
1858-9.....	13,978	44 2
1859-60.....	14,294	43 9
1860-1.....	17,212	53 3
1861-2.....	17,062	55 4
1862-3.....	16,173	55 5
1863-4.....	15,822	44 9
1864-5.....	14,943	40 2
1865-6.....	14,862	41 11
1866-7.....	15,671	49 11
1867-8.....	16,154	64 5
1868-9.....	15,942	63 9
1869-70.....	14,998	48 2
1870-1.....	15,240	46 10
1871-2.....	15,613	56 8
1872-3.....	14,539	57 0
1873-4.....	13,662	58 0

Another point may be illustrated from the statistics supplied to me from this Union. In the 29 parishes comprised within it (22 in Cambridgeshire, 7 in Suffolk) there were, at the time of the last census, 6775 separate families, but only 6394 inhabited houses. The total population was 29,501, so that there was an average of rather more than $4\frac{1}{2}$ persons to each house or cottage. There were 207 uninhabited houses within the Union district, and only 13 in course of building. These figures point to a population either diminishing or increasing very slowly. Accordingly, we find that in 1831 the population of the Union was 24,540; in 1841, 27,215; in 1851, 30,655; in 1861, 28,776; and in 1871, 29,501. The Newmarket

Union is hardly a fair sample of a purely agricultural district. First, there is the town which gives its name to the Union, with its peculiar industry, certainly not agricultural; and one parish in Newmarket (All Saints) has almost doubled its inhabitants during the last forty years. Then the coprolite-diggings have attracted considerable numbers of labourers, or have kept them at home when they would otherwise have migrated. If coprolites, horse-training, and racing were not almost indigenous to the soil, the Union would have shown a marked depopulation. It is worth while to see how this process has gone on in some purely agricultural parishes. Thus, in Brinkley there were 335 people in 1831, and 298 in 1871; in Fordham, the respective numbers were 1325 and 1266; in Isleham, 1942 and 1819; in Kennet, 195 and 159; in Dalham, 538 and 492,—and so on. Yet the people are fruitful and multiply all this time. Reckoning by the excess of births over deaths, the population ought to increase rapidly. For example, in the registration districts of Newmarket—Bottisham, Cheveley, Gazeley, Newmarket, and Soham, which comprise the whole of the Newmarket Union, the births during the ten years 1862-71 were 9333; the deaths, 5846, showing an excess of 3487 births over deaths. But, as we have seen, the population within the same period showed an increase of not much more than one-fifth of this number—only 725, instead of 3487. Here is a similar statement relating to five parishes in East Suffolk: Population in 1861—Denham, 282; Hoxne, 1218; Broome, 291; Oakley, 332; Eye, 2430. Population in 1871—Denham, 259; Hoxne, 1090; Broome, 296; Oakley, 300; Eye, 2396; and this though Eye is the seat of a considerable manufacture. Notwithstanding the usual excess of births over deaths,

the rural population here also has diminished. It is clear, then, that migration or emigration from the rural districts has gone on independently of the labourers' Unions and before they were heard of, though they may now help to adjust the proper balance of supply to demand. What the farmers complain of is not that redundant labour goes where it is wanted, but that the best men go away—the strongest, the most energetic, the best workers. The obvious reply to such a complaint is, that this also is a matter of supply and demand, and if the farmers want the best men they must pay the price which these men find they are worth in the labour market. The drop of bitterness in the farmers' cup is, that the more they educate the children, by subscriptions or rates, the more quickly and certainly the children when they grow up make their way to the towns or leave the country. They sow, in this field, that others may reap. It is a rural version of the *Sic vos non vobis*. "All agricultural parishes are nurseries," writes a landowner, who helps education and migration vigorously all the same. "We have to educate all the population till they are old enough to go away; and we have to keep the old ones. In time things will adjust themselves; and, the population being smaller, there will be fewer to keep. But, like all things in agricultural districts, it will be a long time before the rates feel the effect of diminishing population or even higher wages." It is a fact that in all industrial centres the proportion of young men is much larger, and the proportion of old men much smaller, than are found in the rural districts. Probably some of the villagers who migrate to the towns return to their native places in their old age. It would seem so from some facts given me by a vice-chairman of a board of

There is an obvious advantage in having a central executive, to which local committees may appeal for suggestions and aid in various shapes, and which, without prescribing rules, will keep up a standard of good management. If too much is not attempted at first, these village clubs, working round their common centre, may have a most useful future. I hope that, while care is taken to instruct the labourer, efforts will also be made to amuse him. Peasant life now is dull and colourless almost beyond belief, and its wearying, depressing monotony tends almost as much as ignorance to make the peasant lumpish and boorish. If reasonable recreation is not provided for the labourers, village clubs will compete in vain with village tap-rooms.

APPENDIX.

UNION PICTURES.

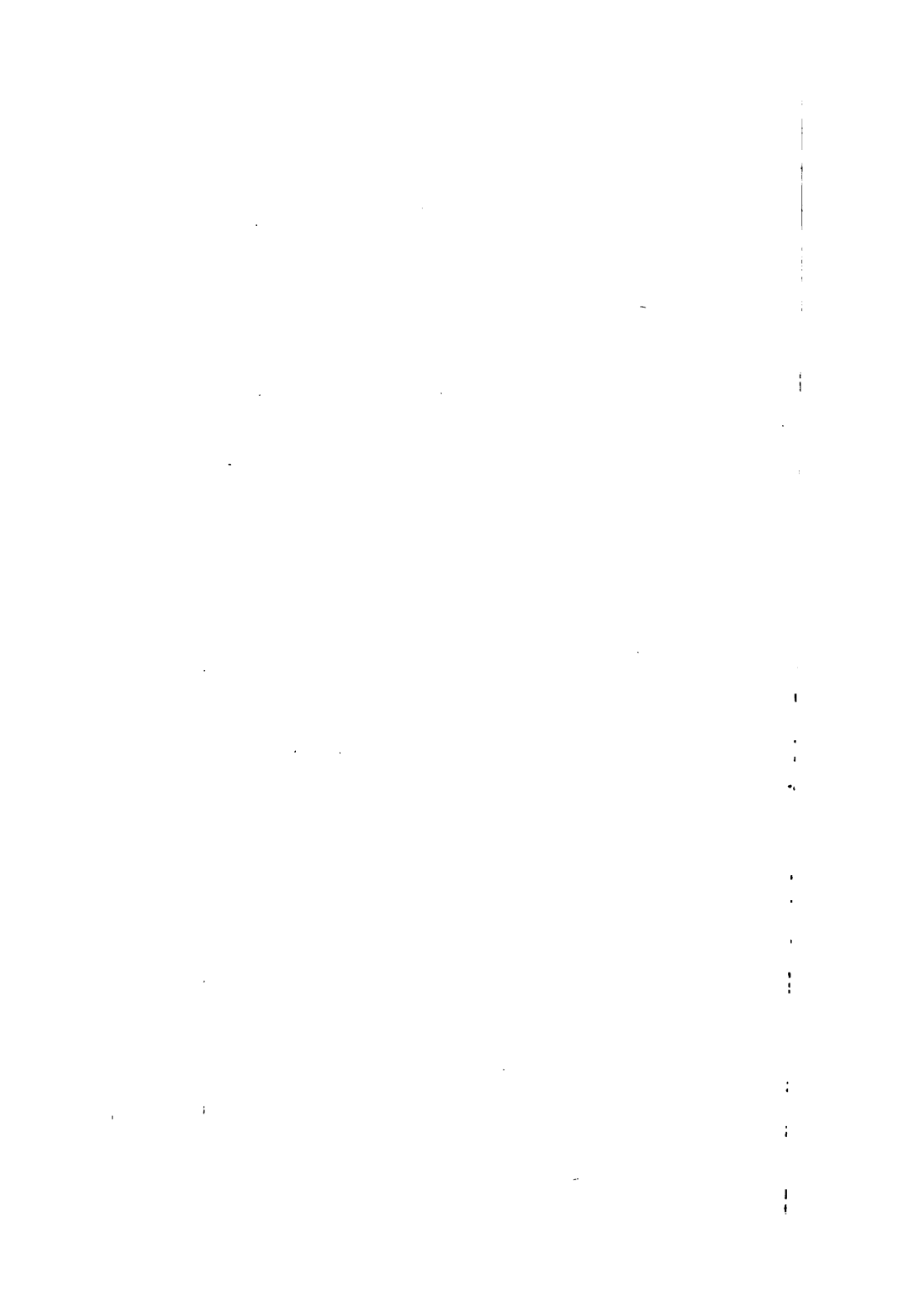


I GIVE here a facsimile of a rude woodcut upon handbills circulated among farm-labourers in the West of England, convening Union meetings during 1874-5. At p. 356 is another still ruder sketch, which formed the heading of large placards issued at the same time and for the same object. Several gentlemen who were announced to take part in the 1874 meetings declined to do so lest they should be supposed to countenance the kind of appeal suggested by these broadsheets. They are referred to in 'The Times' in describing a Union meeting held at Wellington, in Somersetshire, October

22, 1874. A few passages from the letter containing this description may here be given :—

“At this point a farmer, who had interposed many running comments upon the speech of Professor F. W. Newman, became quite irrepressible. Flourishing overhead the ‘Skeleton’ handbill issued by those who called the meeting, he asked repeatedly what they meant by it. At last he broke in, interrupting without scruple the philosophic speech of the Professor, and utterly ignoring the argument: ‘I’m my own ploughman. Do I look like a skeleton?’ (A shout of laughter, for he was red-faced and broad-shouldered, and certainly answered no such description). ‘Who is he, then? I am a fair specimen of a working man, I am; and what I say is, that a good man can always get good wages. Suppose one farmer gives such a man the sack at six o’clock in the morning. Well, another farmer will take him on at seven, and be glad of him.’ In vain the Chairman told the farmer that he might speak presently, but must not interrupt. The farmer did not understand this mode of conducting public discussion, and was like the defendant who cannot be persuaded to postpone his statement, but interrupts the evidence in court with perpetual protests and corrections. At length the Chairman invited the farmer on to the platform, where it was hoped that in a more conspicuous position he would subside till the proper time came for his reply. But the farmer interpreted the invitation to mean that he might go on talking, and no sooner obtained possession of the platform than he began again. It was impossible to put him down, so the Chairman and his friends gave in—the Professor meekly sat down, and Farmer Taylor spoke at large. ‘Don’t tell me about Unionism,’ he said, always pointing to the handbill. ‘Unionism is not good for any man. I like a labourer to have good wages, but I don’t like him to pay men to run about the country spouting. A good labourer ought to have 3s. a-day.’ ‘Do you pay him 3s.?’ he was asked. ‘Yes, I do,’ was the reply. ‘I employ twenty labourers. I don’t believe any of ’em are here; but if you like, I’ll bring every man of ’em to-morrow morning, and they will tell you they all earn their 3s. I’ll tell you something more. If any man here wants to earn 25s. a-week, let him come to me. Yes, 25s. a-week. But I tell you he’ll have to earn the





money before he gets it.' The Chairman.—'Then perhaps you'll support a resolution for giving labourers better wages.' Farmer.—'Yes, if only they earn 'em.' A Voice.—'Ah, you only pay a man what he works hard for.' Farmer.—'Of course, and a man must be a fool if he does otherwise.' Here a momentary lull occurred in what was proving rather a noisy scene, and as people hoped that the farmer had shot all the arrows in his quiver, the Professor resumed in a calm, quiet vein, contrasting strangely with the angry and robust tones which had just died away. He said that, when interrupted, he was about to show that class institutions must be to blame for the present position of the labourers. Now, English Parliaments from the beginning had been hostile to the farm-labourer, their spirit being shown, among other things, by the passing of laws prescribing *maximum* wages. Look, on the other hand, at what had passed in other countries. Prussia was crushed after Jena. The peasants did not fight for the national liberties, because they had no land; but in Von Stein and Hardenberg two statesmen arose who saw the blot and made the peasants practically irremovable from the soil, merely having to pay a quit-rent for their holdings. How had Prussia been rewarded? The people had borne the hard pressure of military laws, and now the Prussian King was German Emperor, and the most powerful sovereign in Europe, to a large extent through the interest which the Prussian peasant possessed in the soil. At this point the voice of the irrepressible farmer was heard once more. He evidently thought the Professor's illustrations an attempt to evade the real question, or at any rate, that they were far over the heads of the audience. 'Come now,' he cried, 'speak to the labourers of Wellington. What have we to do with Prussia?' Professor (gently and with natural politeness)—'I assure you that Prussia has a great deal to do with the question.' Farmer (at the top of his voice, as though he were shouting on a windy day to a ploughman in the middle furrow of the next field)—'Did Prussia ever put out a bill like this?' and he held up the 'skeleton' handbill in triumph. Even the Professor was nonplussed by such rude argument; but his voice in any event would have been overpowered by the storm of angry comments from the labourers in front of him, and by the shrill voices of women.

The farmer kept his ground manfully, and tried to speak again. The Chairman protested against un-English interruptions. Farmer—'Have I said anything un-English?' The Union delegates tried in vain to calm the prevailing excitement. At last the Chairman said if the farmer could not be quiet he must go out. Farmer (with fine sarcasm)—'All right. If you won't hear me, turn me out. Or stop—I'll go out, if you like.' And go out he did, showing a bold front in making his way through the crowd, and flourishing the obnoxious handbill to the last. At the door, I believe, he was rather roughly handled, and went down the staircase with something of the momentum acquired by falling bodies. Of his courage in facing a hostile meeting, one can speak with greater respect than of his temper and discretion. As the French general said of another rash attack in the face of great odds—'*C'était magnifique, mais ce n'était pas la guerre.*' Again the Professor rose, but calmness had gone from that meeting; and as the Chairman ruled that the best restorative of calmness was song, Mr Ball gave 'The Fine Old English Labourer,' and a rousing chorus soothed the audience, who then settled down to listen once more to Mr Newman."

THE CROW BOY.*

WHEN I was but a baredless boy,
Not more'n six years owd,
I us'd t' goo a keepin' crows
In rain an' wind an' cowl.
An' well I du remember now,
Ah, well as it can be,
My little house, a hurdle thatch'd,
In th' mash† agin th' sea.

* From 'Tim Digwell,' an Episode of the Strike in the Wilford Hundred, Suffolk, by John Whinbush, Esq.

† "Mash," *i.e.*, marsh.

Chorus.

Car woo! car woo! yow owd black crow,
Goo fly awa' to Sutton;
If yow stop heer 't 'll cost ye dear,
I'll kill ye ded as mutton.

I used t' rise up wuth th' sun,
'Cos crows is arly bahds;
Full oft tha've made me howl an' run
An' sa' all kinds er wuds.
Th' moor I scar'd th' moor tha' teased,
An' kep' me on fer hours,
Till my poor feet, an' legs, an' knees
Had ommost lost their pow'rs.
Car woo! car woo! &c.

An' if I tried t' git a rest,
Th' warmen fared t' know,
Fer where at fust was on'y one
A flock wood quickly grow.
I scream'd until my voice was hoos,
Just like a young colt's na',
An' when it got so werry thick,
In whispers did I sa'—
Car woo! car woo! &c.

But if it friz right sharp all night,
I'd sum rest in th' morn—
Owd crows can't du no harm, ye know,
When hud th' ground is frorn.
Yet at th' thaw tha' punish'd me;
So when I went t' bed
I dreamt that I was in th' mash,
An' o'er an' o'er I said,
Car woo! car woo! &c.

Th' crows at last becum so bold
That I was well nigh dun,

Then master he took pity and
 Said yow shall have a gun.
 A gun I had, an' powder tew ;
 T' fire it off I tried ;
 Th' blarm'd thing kick'd an' knock'd me down,
 But I got up an' cried,
 Car woo ! car woo ! &c.

Now since I've grown t' be a man
 I've borne with harder blows,
 An' know there's many wusser things
 Than them ere rilin' crows.
 I've wish'd myself a boy agin,
 Altho' I'm gettin' gra',
 An', cood it be, I'd march right off
 To that ere mash an' sa',
 Car woo ! car woo ! &c.

STAND BY THE UNION ! *

TUNE—" *The Good Rhine Wine.*"

STAND by the Union ! all through the land
 The sons of the soil are waking ;
 Join heart to heart, and hand to hand,
 The rusted chains of bondage breaking.

Chorus—For the poor man is weak, though his
 cause be right,
 But the weak grow strong when they
 all unite.

* This and the five following songs are by Mr Howard Evans, reprinted from his 'Songs for Singing at Agricultural Labourers' Meetings,' which have now (penny edition) reached the eightieth thousand.

Stand by the Union ! Labour's hope !
One fibre is light as a feather ;
But the twisted strands of the good ship's rope
Defy the rage of wind and weather.
For the poor man, &c.

Stand by the Union !—the friend of all
Who dare to befriend each other ;
Respond like men to the Union's call—
He helps himself who helps his brother.
For the poor man, &c.

Stand by the Union !—the great may frown ;
We'll be their serfs no longer ;
Though they are strong who tread us down,
The God-given rights of men are stronger.
For the poor man, &c.

Stand by the Union !—firm and true,
We are bound to conquer through it ;
We mean to win for toil its due,
And we're the proper lads to do it.
For the poor man, &c.

Stand to the Union !—onward we march
For defence and not defiance ;
Our trusty chief is Joseph Arch,
In right and union our reliance.
For the poor man, &c.

Stand by the Union !—stick to it now,
With a strength no power can sever ;
We've put our hands with a will to the plough,
We'll never look back, boys, never—never !
For the poor man, &c.

THE FINE OLD ENGLISH LABOURER.

TUNE—" *The Fine Old English Gentleman.*"

COME, lads, and listen to my song, a song of honest toil,
'Tis of the English Labourer, the tiller of the soil ;
I'll tell you how he used to fare, and all the ills he bore,
Till he stood up in his manhood, resolved to bear no more.

This fine old English labourer, one of the
present time.

He used to take whatever wage the farmer chose to pay,
And work as hard as any horse, for eighteenpence a-day ;
Or, if he grumbled at the nine, and dared to ask for ten,
The angry farmer cursed and swore, and sacked him there
and then.

This fine old English labourer, &c.

He used to tramp off to his work while town folk were a-bed,
With nothing in his belly but a slice or two of bread ;
He dined upon potatoes, and he never dreamed of meat,
Except a lump of bacon fat sometimes by way of treat.

This fine old English labourer, &c.

He used to find it hard enough to give his children food,
But sent them to the village school as often as he could ;
But though he knew that school was good, they must have
bread and clothes,
So he had to send them to the fields to scare away the crows.

This fine old English labourer, &c.

He used to walk along the fields and see his landlord's game
Devour his master's growing crops, and think it was a shame ;
But if the keeper found on him a rabbit or a wire,
He got it hot when brought before the parson and the squire.

This fine old English labourer, &c.

But now he's wide awake enough and doing all he can,
At least for honest labour's rights he's fighting like a man ;
Since squires and landlords will not help, to help himself he'll
try,

And if he doesn't get fair wage he'll know the reason why.

This fine old English labourer, &c.

He knows the land would be no use if labour was not there,
And in the profit he insists he'll have a proper share ;
And if they will not own the right of him who sows and delves,
He'll tell the farmer and the squire to till the land themselves.

This fine old English labourer, &c.

They used to treat him as they liked in the evil days of old,
They thought there was no power on earth to beat the power
of gold ;

They used to threaten what they'd do whenever work was
slack,

But now he laughs their threats to scorn with the Union at his
back.

This fine old English labourer, &c.

THE TWO UNIONS.

TUNE—" *The Red, White, and Blue.*"

Who would ever have thought we'd been making
The Union a subject of song,
When our hearts with distress were nigh breaking,
And there seemed no redress for our wrong ?
But the Union I mean is another,
A Union of good men and true,
That, in time, shall abolish the other,
For the old must give place to the new.

Chorus—For the old must give place to the new,
 For the old must give place to the new,
 The Union of Labour for ever;
 The old must give place to the new.

Once the name of the Union was hated,—
 That Union that's worse than a jail;
 Where husband and wife are unmated,
 When age makes them feeble and frail.
 But, much as we hated and feared it,
 We had no better prospect in view,
 Till Arch wrote on his flag, and upreared it,
 "The old shall give place to the new."

For the old, &c.

Good wage is the great curse of labour,
 His lordship in confidence prates;
 Let him give what is just to his neighbour,
 And he'll get back the cost in the rates.
 Mark, farmers and squires, 'ere I finish,
 If you give but to labour its due,
 Your Unions will greatly diminish,
 For the old will give place to the new!

For the old, &c.

OH DEAR! WHAT'LL BECOME OF US?

TUNE—"Oh dear! what can the matter be?"

WHAT'S a labourer's prospect in this land of freedom?
 Six young uns to keep, and twelve shillings to feed 'em,
 A jail and a workhouse, for all those who need 'em:
 Pray what does a labourer lack?

Chorus—Oh dear ! what'll become of us ?
Oh dear ! what'll become of us ?
Oh dear ! what'll become of us ?
If he should give us the sack.

Twelve shillings a-week, it'll just fill one belly ;
But Bill, Tom, and Hal, Polly, Susan, and Nelly,
They eat all day long, my old woman'll tell ye ;
I only can just get a snack.

Oh dear ! &c.

There came an old chap, whom the Union engages,
To show the poor man how to go for more wages ;
Says he, " Ask for more, and if Farmer Grumps rages,
The Union will stand at your back."

Oh dear ! &c.

Says Grumps, " If you join, it will end in disaster ;
How dare you offend such an excellent master ?"
Says I, " If you say so, we'll join all the faster."
Oh ! he looked awfully black !

Oh dear ! &c.

He says, " In the harvest we're putting him quite about ;"
Yet, if he'd be just, there'd be nothing to fight about ;
But he swears he'll send us all to the right about,
When he begins to get slack.

Oh dear ! &c.

There's plenty of work to be had by the willing,
With wages at double the paltry twelve shilling,
And land o'er the sea, to be had for the tilling,
If he should tell us to pack.

Oh dear ! &c.

THE BEGINNING OF REFORM.

TUNE—"Sunny days will come again."

Now our eager hope is burning
 For the better times at hand,
 Let the blind impatient yearning
 Grow into the clear demand ;
 They whose souls contain within them
 Knowledge of the rights they seek,
 Cannot fail, ere long, to win them ;
 Ignorance is always weak.

Chorus—If you'd gain your rights, my brothers,
 Make all true and right within,
 That's the place, before all others,
 Where Reform should first begin.

Do not think, lads, I'm a preacher,
 Wearing song but as a mask,
 But the singer is a teacher,
 If he rightly knows his task.
 I don't tell you, like our Vicar,
 Be contented with your lot,
 But to get on all the quicker,
 Make the most of what you've got.
 If you'd gain, &c.

Sots, who with strong drink bemuddle
 Brains, God gave, that men should think,
 And who daily, nightly fuddle,
 Rise who will, are sure to sink ;
 All the tyrants in creation,
 Will not make their case the worse,
 And no outside reformation
 Can make fat their shrivelled purse.
 If you'd gain, &c.

Crawling sneaks, who go repeating
 Tales to Grumps, will surely find,
 When the orange he's done eating,
 He will throw away the rind ;
 Some one's sure to soon detect him
 Who becomes a spy for pelf,
 And no man will e'er respect him
 If he don't respect himself.

If you'd gain, &c.

I, who know your life of trial,
 Would not make an iron rule ;
 But, with daily self-denial,
 Strive to keep the lads at school.
 Let your own example show them—
 Deeds have mighty power to teach—
 There's no vice but lies below them,
 No great aim they may not reach.

If you'd gain, &c.

FARMER GRUMPS.

TUNE—" *Poor Mary Ann.*"

I'LL sing you a song of our mutual friend, sir,
 Poor Farmer Grumps ;
 He don't sing himself, you may depend, sir,
 Poor Farmer Grumps ;
 For care and trouble never leave him,
 All things were made to vex and grieve him,
 All men to worry and deceive him,
 Poor Farmer Grumps.

He grumbles on for weeks together,
 Poor Farmer Grumps ;
 He grumbles when it's rainy weather,
 Poor Farmer Grumps.

He grumbles when the sky is sunny;
And yet, to me, its rather funny,
Somehow or other he still makes money,
Poor Farmer Grumps.

Whenever they call on him for taxes,
Poor Farmer Grumps,
Into a passion at once he waxes,
Poor Farmer Grumps.
But while he thus the poor-law curses,
He thinks not how their case far worse is
Who have to trust to its tender mercies,
Poor Farmer Grumps.

He growls to you like a sore-headed Bruin,
Poor Farmer Grumps,
That his landlord's game will be his ruin,
Poor Farmer Grumps.
But do not think that his defection
Will add one vote to the Liberal section—
He'll crawl to the squire at the next election,
Poor Farmer Grumps.

And now he in a frightful rage is,
Poor Farmer Grumps;
For his men have asked for a rise of wages,
Poor Farmer Grumps.
So, like a fool, at once he sacked 'em,
But he soon found out that the Union backed 'em,
And off to the North to work it packed 'em,
Poor Farmer Grumps.

He knows he's made an awful blunder,
Poor Farmer Grumps.
Where will he get fresh men, I wonder?
Poor Farmer Grumps.
His cares have made him so much thinner,
And as the Union proves the winner,
Let us forgive the repentant sinner,
Poor Farmer Grumps.

THE LABOURER'S PRAYER.

TUNE—" *Old Hundredth.*"

O THOU, who from Thy lofty throne,
Look'st down alike upon us all,
And with a Father's love dost own,
As Thine own care, the humblest thrall.

Behold, O Lord, our many woes,
Teach our oppressors to be just,
To think us brothers—not as foes,
Nor grind our faces in the dust.

Let those who preach Thy sacred Word,
Speak boldly for the poor man's weal ;
O let their hearts with love be stirred,
To tell the truths they sure must feel.

O give our leaders power to stand,
For right, and justice, every one ;
With wisdom guide the chosen band,
So that Thy will, not ours, be done.

Strengthen, O Lord, each feeble one,
That he may trust Thy truth and might ;
Then, should his day of trial come,
Help him who suffers for the right.

Lord, hear our children's wailing cry :
And though our tyrants vaunt and rave,
We on Thy present help rely,
For Thy right arm is strong to save.

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NEW VERSION.

WHEN Britain's serfs, at Heaven's command,
 Arose and broke from slavery's chain,
 This was the charter of the land,
 And guardian angels sung the strain :
 Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the knaves!
 Britons never shall be slaves.

The nations, not so bless'd as we,
 May in their turn to tyrants fall,
 While we shall flourish great and free,
 The lov'd and envied of them all.

Rule Britannia! &c.

Us, haughty tyrants ne'er shall tame ;
 All their attempts to tread us down
 But will arouse indignant flame,
 And work their woe and our renown.

Rule Britannia! &c.

To *us* belong the nation's reign,
 Our cities shall with commerce shine,
Our welfare shall be then the main,
 Knaves, idlers, tyrants, may then repine.

Rule Britannia! &c.

"Get wisdom"—true nobility ;
 "Knowledge is power;" obey the call :
 Rise to your manhood ; men, be free !
 Knav'ry and arrogance must fall.

Rule Britannia! &c.

HENRY TAYLOR,
General Secretary, National Labourers' Union.

MY MASTER AND I.*

SAYS the master to me, "Is it true? I am told
Your name on the books of the Union's enroll'd;
I can never allow that a workman of mine,
With wicked disturbers of peace should combine.

"I give you fair warning, mind what you're about,
I shall put my foot on it and trample it out;
On which side your bread's buttered, now sure you can see,
So decide now at once for the Union or me."

Says I to the master, "It's perfectly true
That I am in the Union, and I'll stick to it too;
And if between Union and you I must choose
I have plenty to win, and little to lose.

"For twenty years mostly my bread has been dry,
And to butter it now I shall certainly try;
And though I respect you, remember I'm free—
No master in England shall trample on me."

Says the master to me, "A word or two more:
We never have quarrelled on matters before;
If you stick to the Union, ere long, I'll be bound,
You will come and ask me for more wages all round.

"Now I cannot afford more than two bob a-day
When I look at the taxes and rent that I pay,
And the crops are so injured by game, as you see,
If it is hard for you it's hard also for me."

Says I to the master, "I do not see how
Any need has arisen for quarrelling now,
And though likely enough we shall ask for more wage,
I can promise you we shall not get first in a rage.

* This and the concluding songs are taken from anonymous broad-sheets.

"There is Mr Darlow, I vow and declare,
A draper and grocer in Huntingdonshire,
He sticks up for the labouring men, they all say
He has caused the farmers to rise the men's pay.

"There is Mr Taylor so stout and so bold,
The head of the Labourers' Union I'm told,
He persuaded all the men to stick up for their rights,
And they say he's been giving the farmers the gripes."

A NEW SONG ON THE LOCK-OUT OF THE
FARMERS' LABOURERS.

TUNE—"All Round the World."

COME all you jolly farming men,
And listen to my lay,
Altho' we're not on strike again,
We are lock'd out I say.
Our masters they are hard on us,
They want to keep us down,
They want ten shillings' worth of work
For about half-a-crown.

Chorus.

Then all over the world in search of work we'll go,
Before we'll let the farmers keep the labourer's wages low.

For many years they've treated us
Much worse than any slaves;
Half-starved we pass a wretched life
To fill a pauper's grave:
But now we've got more sense, my boys,
The world we'll ramble through;
With willing hands and honest hearts
We'll soon find work to do.

They have lock'd the farmers' labourers out,
And many thousands now
In idleness must walk about
Instead of being at the plough.
The Agricultural Union says
To Harry, Bill, and Jack,
"Unite yourselves with us, my boys,
We'll beat them like a sack."

They'll cross the broad Atlantic then
Before they will give in ;
In Canada there's work for all,
And fortunes there to win.
Let farmers do the best they can—
They were always greedy elves—
If they will not pay the working man,
Why, let them work themselves.

The farmers have a Union now
To oppose their servant-men,
But the man who whistles at the plough
Is quite as good as them.
The men are used to hardships,
And on purpose to get free,
They all will stand a little more—
That the masters soon will see.

The farmers say, "We've done our best
For the men who till the ground ;"
If they had to live as labourers do,
They'd very soon turn round.
Altho' they've lock'd their labourers out,
We tell them to their cheek,
Their bellies would not be so stout
Upon twelve bob a-week.

WE ARE ALL JOLLY FELLOWS WHO FOLLOW
THE PLOUGH.*

It was early one morning at the break of the day,
The cocks were a-crowing ; the farmers did say,
“ Come, rise, my good fellows—come, rise with good will,
For your horses want something their bellies to fill.”

When four o'clock comes then up we rise,
And into the stable, boys, so merrily flies;
With rubbing and scrubbing our horses, I vow,
We are all jolly fellows that follow the plough.

When six o'clock comes, at breakfast we meet,
And beef, bread, and pork, boys, so heartily eat;
With a piece in our pocket, I swear and I vow,
We are all jolly fellows that follow the plough.

Then we harness our horses, and away then we go,
And trip o'er the plain, boys, as nimble as does;
And when we come there, so jolly and bold,
To see which of us the straight furrow can hold.

Our master came to us, and thus he did say,
“ What have you been doing, boys, this long day?
You have not ploughed an acre, I swear and I vow,
And you're d——d idle fellows that follow the plough.”

I stepped up to him and made this reply,
“ We have all ploughed an acre, so you tell a d——d lie;
We have all ploughed an acre, I swear and I vow,
And we are all jolly fellows that follow the plough.”

* This song, though sold freely during the Union agitation, seems to have an earlier origin.

He turned himself round and laughed at the joke—
“ It’s past two o’clock, boys, ’tis time to unyoke ;
Unharness your horses and rub them down well,
And I’ll give you a jug of the very best ale.”

So come all you brave fellows wherever you be,
Come take this advice, be ruled by me ;
So never fear your masters—I swear and I vow,
We are all jolly fellows that follow the plough.

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